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ABSTRACT

This packet contains the four issues of a newsletter published in 1989 by the Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit in England. The Winter issue contains the following articles: "After the Act"; "An Evening at the Theatre"; "Horticulture: A Practical Project with Autistic Adults"; "Shared Reading"; and "Literacy and Adult Basic Education in Industrialized Countries." In the Spring edition are the following: "How Special Are Special Needs?"; "Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative"; "Numeracy--Abstract Art or Basically Boring?"; and "Setting Up an Open Learning Centre." The Summer newsletter contains these items: "Employment Training: Cooperation or Competition?"; "Literacy for the Workplace"; "DeskTop Publishing for Adult Literacy Materials"; and "Making a Start with Computers." In the Autumn issue, the following articles are included: "ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages): A Nation's Neglect"; "Going Dutch!"; "National Writing Festival"; and "DART (Directed Activities Related to Text)--Developing Independent Readers." Each issue contains about a dozen reviews of books and other learning materials related to adult basic education. (KC)

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Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

Newsletter

Nos. 32-35

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WINTER
1989

No 32

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

Photo Peter Ward

Kenneth Brooksbank, Chairman of ALBSU's Management Committee, retires (see page 8).

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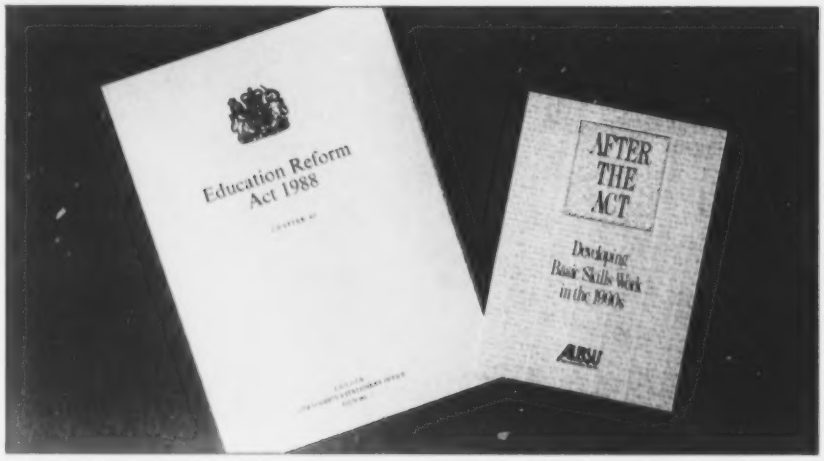
AFTER THE ACT

This year marks the beginning of major changes for education, many of which will have some effect on basic education. Whilst the Education Reform Act 1988 – the most important piece of educational legislation since 1944 – is not specifically concerned with basic education provision for adults, some of the changes introduced by the Act will necessitate changes in the way that our area of work operates.



In the main the Act is concerned with the organisation and curriculum of compulsory education for children between the ages of 5 and 16, and acres of newspaper coverage have focused on the more controversial parts of the legislation such as opting out of schools and City Technology Colleges. Yet the most important aspect of the legislation concerns the introduction of a core curriculum in schools and the establishment of attainment targets, and methods for assessing attainment, of children at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. Whilst it is clear that there has always been a considerable amount in common between the curricula of different schools, for the first time legislation will indicate what needs to be covered by all pupils at certain ages, albeit, without interfering with how it is taught. This is clearly a major change as, whilst other countries have had a core curriculum for some years, determining the curriculum in this country has been very much a matter for individual schools and teachers, although public examinations have perhaps set most aspects of the curriculum for some pupils towards the end of compulsory schooling.

Whilst this will not have an immediate effect on basic education, in the mid 1990's if not sooner, students will be seeking help to improve their basic skills who have been taught in schools where the core curriculum has been in operation. It may be, of course, that the core curriculum will be so effective that the number of young people and adults seeking help will have dwindled to a trickle, although evidence from other industrialised countries, where a core curriculum already exists, leaves some doubt whether this will be the case.

ATTAINMENT TARGETS

Specific attainment targets at set ages and regular assessment may also influence basic education work with adults. Certainly the reports of the working groups concerned with different aspects of the curriculum would make useful reading for anyone concerned with basic education, as would the particular work being undertaken to develop an effective system of assessment. Assessing progress and attainment poses problems for everyone involved in learning; often it is too rigid and inflexible to be of much use; sometimes it assesses anything but what has been learnt; on occasions it is so informal that assessment only exists in the teacher's head and is rarely communicated to the learner.

Assessment is, of course, only half of the battle. Most teachers already know which pupils in the class are having difficulties and which are struggling to master the basics of reading and writing. Finding out is relatively easy; it's what you do about it when you have found out that's difficult.

FURTHER EDUCATION

The Education Reform Act's effect on further education, including the education of adults, is likely to give greater emphasis to planning and co-ordination and this should, in general, be welcomed. Basic education does not fit neatly into any one sector of the post school education service although for administrative reasons education authorities often place it in adult education. Moreover, an increasing range of agencies and organisations provide some basic education for young people and adults including adult education centres, further education colleges, Employment Training and YTS training managers, voluntary and community organisations, prisons and other establishments for offenders, social services, health services, probation services. All of this needs to be logically planned and effectively co-ordinated to ensure that duplication does not take place and that the limited resources available are spent as wisely as possible. Furthermore, increasingly both young and older adults are seeking basic skills support as part of some other course in a college or as part of vocational training organised through a substantial number of public and private agencies.

This diversity is both a strength and a weakness of current provision. A range of providers will be needed if substantial provision is to be made available (no single LEA currently makes provision for more than 5 per cent of the estimated people in need at any one time) and diversity is essential in meeting the range of very different needs and wishes basic education

students have. However, a large number of providers and apparent diversity cannot be effective without a sound framework for planning and co-ordination and sadly this does not always exist.

Currently about two thirds of LEA's employ a county or borough co-ordinator for basic education and rather fewer specifically for English as a Second Language. In the main, however, these co-ordinators are not responsible for all of the basic skills provision in an authority's area; rather they tend to have more direct responsibility for basic skills work organised as part of adult or community education and, at best, limited influence over work organised as part of the activities of colleges of further education. Basic skills training provided as part of Employment Training or the Youth Training Scheme is even further removed from the influence of a county or borough co-ordinator and often an entirely different structure exists for co-ordination, where co-ordination exists at all. This level of planning and co-ordination may not matter very much but for the confusion it presents to the potential student. It is, after all, little wonder that most new basic education students are not sure whether they have ever been in tuition before.

ALBSU believes that the Education Reform Act does present an opportunity to develop and strengthen basic skills provision in England and Wales and it is a responsibility for us all to ensure that it is used positively, rather than used to erode and dilute existing provision. Planning and co-ordination are of crucial importance particularly as colleges, and to some extent other institutions, will gain greater independence and autonomy under the Act and, without planning and co-ordination, whether basic skills work is accorded high or low priority may rely rather more on the support of individuals within a college than need within the college's community. Furthermore, we all know how easy it is to hide or disguise need in respect of disadvantaged, and often inarticulate adults, who are at best apathetic towards educational institutions and at worst antagonistic to, in their eyes, symbols of failure.

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

It is equally important to ensure that English for Speakers of Other Languages (usually inaccurately called English as a Second Language or ESL) provision is strengthened and developed in the light of the Reform Act. Access to learning opportunities for adults whose first language is not English is of crucial importance in a society where inadequate mastery of the major language used will deny them opportunities to participate effectively or to take up entitlements and rights. Recognition of this is not to deny the value of community languages or to place greater value on English; rather it recognises that English is the major form of communication in our society (there is, of course, a rather special case for Welsh in large parts of Wales) and that to deny access to opportunities to improve English is to deny equality of opportunity.

Towards the end of 1988 ALBSU mounted three Conferences in Birmingham, London and Manchester – to consider how ESOL might most effectively be developed in the 1990's. These proved extremely valuable not least for the range of views expressed by participants. What was uniformly striking, however, was the lack of any real needs analysis amongst bi-lingual adults including the absence of reliable information about the scale and range of need. The absence of this key information makes it extremely difficult to argue a well supported case for additional resources as well as impossible to assess the effectiveness of existing provision in meeting estimated needs.

ESOL provision also suffers from poor planning and lack of co-ordination. Even in authorities with well established provision, often little contact appears to exist between different providers. Thus, whilst it is somewhat of a caricature, most community based provision is very part-time, is largely attended by women and is available in a large number of different locations whilst colleges often provide courses, sometimes called access courses or erroneously English as a Foreign Language, which are more substantial, are largely attended by men and are often vocationally linked.

Much ESOL provision is funded under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act. This allows LEAs to claim 75% of expenditure from the Home Office in respect of ethnic minority adults from Commonwealth Countries. Section 11 is currently under review (the criteria were in some respects tightened up in 1986) and it is not yet clear if, or how, it will operate in the future. Moreover, some authorities with identified needs have not applied for Section 11 funding and in others the 25% LEA contribution is effectively used as a 'brake' on the total expenditure in ESOL and, thus, the level and range of provision.

Working group at the Birmingham conference.

CONCLUSION

The Education Reform Act (and other changes to take effect in 1989 such as the re-organisation of vocational training outlined in the recent Employment White Paper and the change in educational broadcasting particularly on ITV) provide both potential problems as well as positive opportunities to develop basic skills provision. It will be important to ensure that basic skills and ESOL are not marginalised in a desire to develop purely income generating courses with high staff/student ratios. We need to argue that basic skills and ESOL provision need to be seen as a priority by every college, community school or adult centre and ensure that every LEA makes this crucial area of work a central feature of development plans. If the Education Reform Act is to be of benefit in improving the quality of education and the health and welfare of our society, it will need to be used to ensure the availability of a greater range of opportunities for a greater number of people.

'AN EVENING AT THE THEATRE'

Nine months after students and tutors sat in a pub, and had the first idea of staging a play, 'An Evening at the Theatre' took place. In this article, Judith Bevan (Tutor Organiser) and Christine Charles (Area Organiser) describes how students and tutors in Adult Basic Education in Leicester set about writing, producing and performing the plays which made them 'famous for two hours'.

HOW IT BEGAN

Sometime in May 1987 a group of students and tutors were sitting in a pub one evening after class discussing world events. Brian, a student, mentioned that he and a volunteer tutor in his group, Phil, had been going to a Writers' Workshop and Phil had started writing a play. Someone else said that Shaun, a student in another group, had also written a play. Shaun had said that he wanted his work to be recognised. It was suggested that perhaps the two plays could both be put on as a production. Some of us sat very quietly but the idea grew until we were all involved in 'the plays'.

It was a new venture, an audacious project which we did not think had been attempted before. As time passed we began to realise why.

THE TWO PLAYS

I Though I'd Better Explain
by Shaun Reilly.

This play was a serious drama.

This is the introduction taken from the programme:

'The play you are about to see is a story like any other story. This story tells of experiences that are happening every day in some way, in every place we like to call home. It is about a man's inadequacies and his family; about his father and his mother.

It is about a family whose lives were made miserable by a father who could not see their pain for his own.

It is about a mother whose dreams were broken on the night of their wedding day from a life of poverty to a life of hate. Even her wedding night dreams were killed by his drink and his touch. She can still smell him in her mind's eye.

The son lives in the house of his mind where the flowers grow outside and his mother's tears fall safely away, and where his father is "drinking just a bit now" – that's alright! The daughters hide behind their mother's hatred. The father just hates the ones he hurts.

I hope this play doesn't bring back too many bad memories.'

Shaun Reilly

The Final Frontier
by Phil Rowe

Final Frontier was a humorous 'take-off' of Star Trek. The characters in it were Captain Quirk, Mr. Spooks, Mrs. Quirk, Zebedee and other such unlikely persons.

This is the introduction, taken from the programme:

'Space . . . A really big place with lots of gaps in it.

A place with enough room for everyone . . . even Cyril Smith . . . but only just!

This is a journey into the unknown made by the crew of the Starship Capitalise whose 59 minute mission is to poke their noses in and interfere where they're not wanted. They are led by Captain Quirk whose aim is to spread the motto of the federation "I'm alright Jack". They shave off all their hair to baldly go where no man has been before.

This is a story of love . . . a story of hope . . . a story of courage . . . a story of men . . . (woman's voice) and women. Oh yeah, and women.

Photo: D. Cecchini

Waiting to go on stage.

'A fight of good against evil.
David against Goliath.
Right against wrong.
Angie against Den.
A tale to bring hope to all . . .
A lesson to be learnt.
An idea to inspire!'

Phil Rouse.

THE PLANNING

A letter was sent to all the groups in the area asking for those interested to attend an 'initial meeting'. We needed actors, help with publicity, costumes, stage management, makeup, lighting, sound, scenery and refreshments.

There was much discussion about the cost of the tickets. We finally settled on £1 per ticket with concessionary rates for the unwaged and children. This money covered our expenses.

Some people who came to the first meeting 'just to listen' found themselves with 'parts'. At the second meeting Brian had made up mini sets and drawings for the scenery. It was the first time somebody had taken the initiative to see the idea through to a realistic conclusion. In fact Brian was responsible for all the scenery in the plays.

We had two meetings where we read through the scripts. Two of the actors had been in amateur dramatics before but apart from that we had no experience of acting or producing plays.

THE DIFFICULTIES

There were twenty people from six groups involved in the plays; students, volunteer tutors, group tutors, tutor organiser and area organiser. It was hard going at first. There was no leader. Everything was negotiated. Two people on separate occasions felt they were isolated. There was even talk of backing out but we talked it through and carried on.

There were obviously many difficulties to overcome. There was the problem of getting to know people and valuing what they had to say. Great support was given to one another and eventually there was the feeling of belonging.

We had some discussion over the language in both scripts and this was modified to some extent. There were problems with the reading of scripts and the learning of lines but obviously help was given at this stage.

The plays were rehearsed in rooms at Fosse Neighbourhood Centre as we were unable to have the stage because the hall was used every night. We overcame this by rehearsing on Saturday too, so we could have the stage.

Four days before the performance we were asked about the fire regulations – what fire regulations? We had applied for a licence but did not know we had to do anything else. That afternoon we dashed out and bought some fire proofing solution – cost £15! It took two days to fireproof all the scenery and props.

Photo: D. Cecchini

The dressing room.

THE SUPPORT

We received a good deal of support from the staff at Fosse Centre. We borrowed stage flats from the Eyres Monsell Dramatic Society and the Dovelands Players lent us a set of costumes. A carpet company transported the scenery and staging blocks. The Audio Visual Department at Fosse helped with the Lighting and Sound. Sixteen students and tutors helped on the nights of the performances with programmes, tickets and refreshments.

We were rather concerned about our lack of experience and expertise so a producer from a local Drama Society came to one of our rehearsals. She felt the plays were taking shape and gave us good advice and encouragement.

The Leicester Mercury and Radio Leicester came and interviewed us and took photographs and also advertised the plays which were finally performed on Friday 29th and Saturday 30th January.

Everyone felt that there was good audience response. We had about 160 people in the audience on both nights.

We were disappointed that there were no representatives from Community Colleges or Community Education but we were very pleased at the support we received from other areas in A.B.E.

SOME THOUGHTS FROM STUDENTS AND TUTORS

The End of an Era

'Time seems empty now. The air is no longer charged with static. No nagging doubt or ill learned line. No problem to sort or obstacle to overcome.

Considering the effort and time it took to produce this play, you would think its end would mean a sigh of relief, but no! Two days were the culmination of eighteen months. Two days can seem long to the bored, perhaps an eternity. Two days that in my mind flare up like brief, incandescent flashes.

The plan formed as a drunken blurr, coated in naive simplicity. A play, a fund raiser. We had the material, we had the writer, but could he or would he shape it into something that could be used.'

Brian – Student

'Being up there on the stage was not as harrowing as I thought it would be. In fact if I was totally honest I would say that I really enjoyed it. Being up there with the audience hanging on my every word (nobody ever listens to a word I say usually!).' *P. – Tutor*

'Hi there. It's Shaun, yes Shaun, the man, the playwright. I've been told to write this because they needed an opinion on that wonderful play by that gifted man. Any offers considered, heaps of talent and on top of all that modest as well.

Well the play, it's about families and their effect on each other as individuals, the social interaction, the pain and the lies. It's about society's general attitude to the family unit with its fairy tale mentality which denies its problems until it's too late.' *Shaun – Student*

'The Father was a drunk. The play was realistic. It was quiet and calm but then blew up suddenly and quietened suddenly. The main part was played by the Mother. The Father was a layabout and a troublemaker. The family could only stand so much.' *B.F. – Student*

'I think it boosted everyones confidence and remarks from the audience were equally good. Everyone enjoyed themselves. We were famous for two hours and people, we hope were more aware of what we were doing.' *M. – Tutor.*

THE BENEFITS

There were great benefits gained from the months we spent together. There was the development of friendship and trust. Everyone became more confident in themselves and one another. Two of the students taking part have severe learning difficulties. They were part of the team and their contributions were valued.

One person who came to help backstage, as a friend, had a part in both plays and is now a volunteer tutor.

It is perhaps significant that when Jason came to help with the lighting he said "There doesn't seem to be anyone in charge". We would like to think that there wasn't anyone in charge. We had negotiated throughout and it had been a learning experience for all of us.

It was hard work but well worth the effort.

HORTICULTURE:

A Practical Project with Autistic Adults

Thorne House, near Doncaster, was once the manager's house for the local brewery. After extensive fund raising by the parents of a group of autistic children the house and grounds were bought, and have become the home for the Thorne House Autistic Community for young adults. This is the setting for a therapeutic residential unit in which literacy and numeracy are being developed, alongside the other activities, through an ALBSU Establishment Grant.

The staff at Thorne House have developed a wide range of practical activities, which make full use of the Day Centre and the extensive garden. In this article Malcolm Buckley, Senior Instructor, describes ways in which gardening can offer stimulus, variety and positive feedback for residents who often have difficulty in sustaining concentration.

Introduction

The horticultural/environmental unit at Thorne House was set up with the idea of creating a unit that would be therapeutic but at the same time be capable of providing training in a number of horticultural skills, incorporating basic education in a practical situation.

We have found the value of such a unit by the advances some of our residents have made, through using basic literacy and numeracy in a practical setting with an end result, that they can identify with.

Potato planting

One such case was Steven, who was always a little difficult to motivate in any area of education while in the Day Centre rooms.

While working on the horticulture programme, we started planting potatoes, Steven was asked to help, which he did for 5 or 10 minutes then as usual lost interest. A planting board was made, which consisted of a 6 foot length of 4 inch wide wood, with "V" shaped notches cut in every 6 inches.

Steven was again asked to help and the purpose and end result of what we were doing explained to him, he was then given the task of planting the potatoes by counting a given number of notches, putting a tuber down then counting again all along the board. This he did concentrating far more than before on his counting and work, and got such a personal boost, he made a point of telling people what he had done. Steven is now showing similar interest in other things.

The boards are progressive – moving through numbers with dots – to numbers alone – to a board marked out as a large rule.

Basic numeracy is also encouraged through the counting of plants, seeds, canes, etc.

More advanced skills are being used by some residents in the form of basic stock taking, with garden equipment, the residents involved in this get a great boost from the responsibility, and again concentrate more than on other tasks.

We have also a small number of residents being trained in the use of power lawn mowers. One resident, David, is now fully proficient, which has been a great boost for him, and he now considers the lawn areas as his responsibility.

The Forestry Project

One other main project at Thorne House is the Forestry Certificate of Merit scheme, this entails a group undertaking a forestry-based project, and following it through to completion. The project at Thorne House includes:

1. the making and stocking of a tree nursery plot, including the growing from seed collected by the group.
2. the clearance of undergrowth from some of the stands of major trees we have, then the aftercare of such areas.
3. the construction of an educational trail through the tree areas, leading eventually to a trail involving numeracy, literacy, colour and shape, as well as the environmental aspects.

The trail will be capable of being used by all levels with help for some by staff.

The values of practical work

Overall we are finding that by working on a low pressure work system, basic education in conjunction with practical horticultural/environmental work, is being more readily accepted by residents than in a normal teaching situation.

It is my hope that as the unit grows and matures we will see long term benefits for some residents, with the possibility of employment in horticulture and or associated trades.

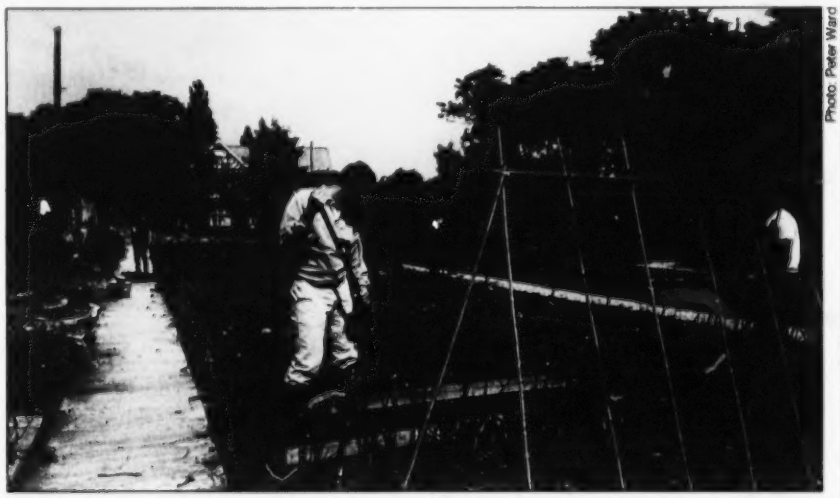


Photo: Peter Ward

Gardening work at Thorne House.

SHARED READING

An approach to helping adults to improve their reading

What is the value of shared reading? How do students and tutors set about using this method? In this article members of the Special Needs Support Service in Coventry Education Authority offer practical answers to both these questions.

Photo: Peter Ward

Literacy work at the BEN Unit in Coventry.

What is it?

Shared reading is when a better reader works together with a poorer reader in a relationship to improve the poorer reader's reading. It is based on the belief that reading improves by a better reader working together with a poorer reader. There is nothing particularly technical about this approach and the method outlined can be changed to suit the individual's learning style. It may not, however, suit everyone and should never be forced upon anyone or used totally to the exclusion of other approaches.

The following approach is one which has been used with people of all ages. Talk it through with the student and see if you would like to try it.

The Method

There are three stages:

Before starting to read, the helper and the reader look at the book or piece of text, and talk about the subject matter.

1. The helper reads the first page or paragraph aloud, making the text as interesting as possible.
2. The helper reads the page or paragraph again and the reader joins in.
3. The reader reads the page or paragraph alone and the helper supplies words that the reader cannot read.

What makes shared reading different?

1. It takes the pressure off the reader because he or she is not asked to perform.
2. The reader knows what the reading is about before he or she starts and so gets a sense of story.
3. It directs the reader's attention away from the difficulty he or she has with particular words because he has already heard them in context before he begins to read.
4. It emphasises fluency, understanding and use of context, and the extraction of meaning from the text.
5. It does not concentrate on phonics or sounding out which can break up the flow of meaning.
6. It allows readers to choose books that interest them, that may be above their reading level.

What skills does the helper need?

1. To be able to make the book interesting.
2. To pace the reading when the reader joins in at Stage 2. Finger pointing may help here.
3. To time the correction procedure when the reader is reading alone, e.g. if the reader makes a mistake or fails to read a word correctly, the helper should wait for a few seconds to see if the reader can supply the correct word. If the reader cannot read the word, the helper should say the word, the reader should repeat it and then continue reading.
4. Knowing when the reader is ready to miss out one of the stages.
5. Knowing when the reader is ready to read alone.

   A pre-arranged signal – a nudge or tap on the book can be made by the reader if he or she wishes to continue alone. As soon as the reader makes a mistake, the correction procedure is applied and the pair continue reading together until the reader signals again that he is ready to read alone.

Materials

The student and helper choose the reading materials together. These can be newspapers, books, magazines, leaflets, anything in fact that the student wishes to read.

How long?

If the method is working well then do shared reading every session. (Maybe somebody in the student's home can carry on with the work?).

From experience, it appears best not to do more than say 25 minutes each session unless you both really want to carry on. If the student does not like working in the shared reading situation, then do not carry on.

How shared reading will develop over a period of time

As both helper and student become more experienced at shared reading, a number of changes will take place:

- Stage 1 will increasingly be left out.
- There will be an increased speed in reading.
- The reading together will become more fluent and the need for pointing will diminish.
- The student will want to read alone more quickly and more frequently.
- The student will become more confident in reading.

Remember you may change the methodology to suit your own way of working together, e.g. you may only do Stage 2.

The student may want to start at stage 3.

It is about being sensitive to the learning style of the student.

Record keeping

It may be useful to keep a note of what has been read and the progress which is being made. This is up to you and the students.

Information

ESL Conferences

In November 1988 ALBSU hosted a series of three conferences entitled 'Developing English as a Second Language in the 1990's' which took place in Manchester, London and Birmingham, and were chaired by Councillor Nilofar Siddiqui, Gus John and Councillor Najma Hafeez respectively.

The aims of the conferences were:

- to consider the major issues in developing high quality language and literacy for bi-lingual adults.
- to provide an opportunity for an exchange of information and experience between practitioners, members of ethnic minority groups and policy makers.

Over 450 people attended including practitioners, policymakers, elected members, representatives from the Council for Racial Equality and from ethnic community groups. The conferences were organised in two plenary sessions featuring keynote addresses. "The National Perspective – Placing ESL in Context', was presented by HMI Inder Gera. This was followed by a choice of four seminar groups on the following topics: Outreach work, Staff Development and Training, Open/Flexible Learning Materials and Curriculum Development. The final plenaries offered Local Perspectives on developing ESL, and were given by the following speakers, nominated by NATECLA: Sheila Goodman, Charanjit Ajit Singh and Sheila Dunman.

A report on all three conferences will be available from the Unit shortly.

Photo: Peter Ward

HMI Inder Gera addressing the conference in Birmingham.

Kenneth Brooksbank

Photo: Peter Ward

At the end of 1988, Kenneth Brooksbank retired as the Chairman of ALBSU's Management Committee. After a distinguished career in local government, notably as Chief Education Officer of Birmingham, Ken Brooksbank became Chairman of the Management Committee of the Adult Literacy Unit in 1978. In 1980 he became ALBSU's first Chairman.

His enthusiasm, commitment and wisdom have played a substantial part not only in the development of ALBSU, but in the increased profile for basic education in England and Wales. Everyone connected with the Unit wishes him a long and happy retirement.

The Spelling Pack

Produced by ALBSU to provide supporting material for groups working on improving spelling skills. The pack contains advice, illustrated teaching materials and practice worksheets across a range of techniques for spelling work. All worksheets are photocopiable.

Price: £4.75
Postage: single copies 90p; 5 copies £2.60; 10 copies £3.30.

Diploma in Teaching and Learning

RSA's new Diploma in Teaching and Learning in ABE is now into its second year. The Diploma has created a great deal of interest, which indicates the importance of providing relevant INSET for ABE practitioners. A unique feature of the scheme is that it allows centres to develop their own programme to meet their own needs but within a nationally validated structure.

The new Diploma will complement ALBSU's scheme based on its recent Pilot Accreditation Projects which will be launched during 1989.

Enquiries about the Diploma are welcomed and from those interested in acting as Assessors for the scheme. Details from Brian Bettaney at RSA Examinations Board, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6EZ.

Photo: Peter Ward

Reed International sponsored a reception for ALBSU at their Royal Academy of Arts Toulouse Lautrec Exhibition.

Spelling Tips Leaflet

Multiple copies of the very successful tips leaflet are available from the Unit.

Postage: Up to 5 copies free on receipt of large SAE; 25 copies £2.10; 100 copies £2.80.

Context

Produced jointly by ALBSU and BBC Enterprises. This program is based on the highly successful 'Developing Tray'. The program contains 64 texts arranged in thematic sections, and gives practice at a range of levels. Although designed to accompany the BBC series 'Spelling It Out', the software is of use in its own right. Suitable for the BBC Micros Model B, B+ and Master 128 with DFS.

Price: £14.95
Available from:
BBC Soft, c/o Vector Services, 13 Dennington Street, Wellingborough, Northants.

Photo: Peter Ward

Employment Minister, John Cope, speaking at the launch of Literacy and Numeracy for Work, said *"The Government cannot and will not write off those who may have missed the boat during their school days"*.

Copies of "Literacy and Numeracy for Work", free on receipt of large SAE, from the Unit.

The launch also marked the publication of the joint ALBSU/COIC publications "Working on Reading", "Working on Number", and "Working on Writing", (wrongly listed in our last Newsletter as "Working on Spelling"). These publications are available from ALBSU and COIC.

Dear Sir,

Re: Newsletter No. 30 – Fourth World Basic Skills Project

We should like to thank Skilltrain in Bournemouth for their helpful letter to you of 2nd August, referring to what appears to be a lack of safety measures in our workshop at Frimhurst, a photograph of which was reproduced in your summer 1988 newsletter.

Like many of your readers, we were rather alarmed to see this photograph in print. It was actually set up by a photographer on a day when the workshop was closed and was being reorganised and does not reflect the workshop in operation.

We can reassure your readers that rightly, our workshops are professionally supervised and the kind of points raised in Skilltrain's letter are taken into account in our standard safety procedures.

We should be delighted to welcome representatives from Skilltrain to Frimhurst, and any of your other readers. We know how much we can all gain from sharing our experience.

Yours faithfully,
Stuart Williams
General Secretary

"Developing Basic Skills in the 1990's"

Offers advice and guidance in the light of the new Educational Reform Act. Copies are available free of charge from ALBSU.

Adults Learning

A new monthly journal for everyone involved in the education and training of adults, published by NIACE 10 times a year, beginning in September 1989. It will give professional and voluntary staff, full or part-time, in all sectors of adult education and training an accessible and regular source of news and information in this rapidly developing field. It will also give educators and trainers a vehicle for expressing their own views, needs and findings. A year's subscription to 'Adults Learning' will cost you only £10, including postage. For further information, inlcuding a sample issue of the journal, please write to: Adults Learning, NIACE, 19B De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE

Doing Research: A Study Weekend

April 7-9 1989
Goldsmiths' College, London.

A chance to learn practical ideas for research work. Open to students and tutors in ABE, if possible in two or threes from the same centre or college.

Organised jointly by RaPAL and the Lee Community Education Centre (Goldsmiths' College).

Cost: £38 for all accommodation/meals. Ask about our travel support scheme.

Contact: Wendy Moss, Lee Community Education Centre, 1 Aislibie Road, London SE12 8QH (tel: 01-852 4700) for more details.

(RaPAL – Research and Practice in Adult Literacy).

LITERACY AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

European Co-operation

Literacy and basic skills work takes place across Europe, but contacts between practitioners and organisers are relatively limited. This article, which has been written by organisers in several European countries, is the result of discussions about how more contacts could be established. Each country agreed to reprint the article in their own newsletter.

European Co-operation

1990 has been proclaimed "International Literacy Year" by the United Nations. Whilst conferences and exchanges have already been started on a world wide level, dealing with overall organisational problems concerning International Literacy Year, there is a need of co-operation on a grass root level between tutors and organisers in different countries. In a European perspective, International Literacy Year could be a step towards 1992, the year of the implementation of free exchanges within the European Community – exchanges on the economic and political sector, but also in the field of education.

Literacy and Adult Basic Education have become a more and more important element of education, particularly with regard to the integration of various social and ethnical group, with regard to the outstanding problem of the unemployed and their educational needs and with regard to the necessity of diminishing regional inequalities within the EEC.

Creating a European network for Literacy and Adult Basic Education is a means towards a closer co-operation.

International Co-operation on Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Although adult literacy work has a lengthy history in developing countries, it is only in the last twenty years that industrialised countries have recognised that a substantial problem exists in their societies. The reasons why a significant number of adults want help with reading, writing and basic maths in industrialised countries are complex and a good deal of literature already exists on this subject. What is clear is that practitioners in different industrialised countries have much to learn from co-operation with each other.

Clearly there are problems such as language and different education systems as well as the time needed to facilitate worthwhile exchange. In addition, existing international organisations rarely offer opportunities for literacy workers in industrialised countries to meet or take part in exchanges.

Some contact already exists between the responsible non-governmental agencies, but this remains ad-hoc. Yet much could usefully be done if funds were available for, for example a European Newsletter, practitioners' exchanges, student visits and seminars and workshops. This network, however, will need to be co-ordinated if a range of activities is to be established on a regular basis rather than a series of conferences. To date there does not appear to be a great deal of coherent planning on a European basis and many conferences appear to be little more than an exchange of basic information. We need, however, to move away from this type of exchange towards greater collaboration on specific issues, such as good practice and research, if co-operation and collaboration are to be effective.

Hopefully, as we move towards International Literacy Year in 1990 increased European co-operation on adult literacy can be one of the major aims. While every country may have its own plans, a European poster, for example, which appeared throughout Europe on International Literacy Day in 1990 could be the beginning of increased and more effective co-operation.

A Network for Literacy

What would the organisation of a network look like? The development of Literacy work and ABE in Europe shows remarkable similarities. In spite of different cultural and political backgrounds it is clear that on matters of methodology of teaching, learning goals, tutor training and strategies for the development of the field there is emerging a common core of thinking which is shared by persons engaged in literacy and ABE.

In January 1988, a group of people involved in the development of literacy and basic education in different European countries came together at the invitation of SVE, the Dutch studycentre for adult education to discuss the possibilities for such a network. Rita Veiga da Cunha from the EEC was present as an observer. This group decided to try to establish a European network for adult basic education organisations and workers.

Perspectives

The network is seen as a means of organizing contacts and fruitful exchanges between adult basic education workers in the European countries. The general feeling is that we can learn from each other and that we can strengthen our work in our own countries through contacts with colleagues in other countries. The network can also help in keeping literacy and adult basic education on the political and educational agenda in Europe. If the network is functioning and backed up by as many workers as possible from the European countries it can represent the field of adult basic education on the European level. It can provide information and assist in making the European public and its politicians aware of the problems and the need to tackle them.

Although important, the network does not wish to function as a PR group or a lobby alone. The most important function for the network will be the organisation of the exchange of ideas, concepts, teaching and learning methodologies etc. between workers. The development of a study and working visits programme is seen as an important task. Possibilities must be created for adult basic education workers to spend some time working with colleagues in other countries. Conferences, seminars and working groups on different subjects (e.g. tutor training, teaching/learning methods, practice based research etc.) can be organised. Not as academic meetings where lengthy papers are read but as gatherings where practitioners can learn from each others experiences to develop and improve national adult basic education practices. Information about the development of adult basic education and literacy can be spread through the different national magazines and newsletters.

Problems

The major problem of getting such a network going is of course the funding. The working party is trying to find funds within governments, supranational bodies and from charitable organisations. Any suggestions for possible funding are welcome.

Another problem is finding the proper contact person in the different European countries. We are looking for organisations and people who have key positions in their country in regard to contacts with the field of adult basic education and literacy. (Especially in Southern Europe and Scandinavia).

The working party decided to take the year 1988 to find solutions to these and related problems. If in that year no solutions are found for the funding problem, we will have to see what can be done with our own limited resources and contributions from other interested organisations and field workers.

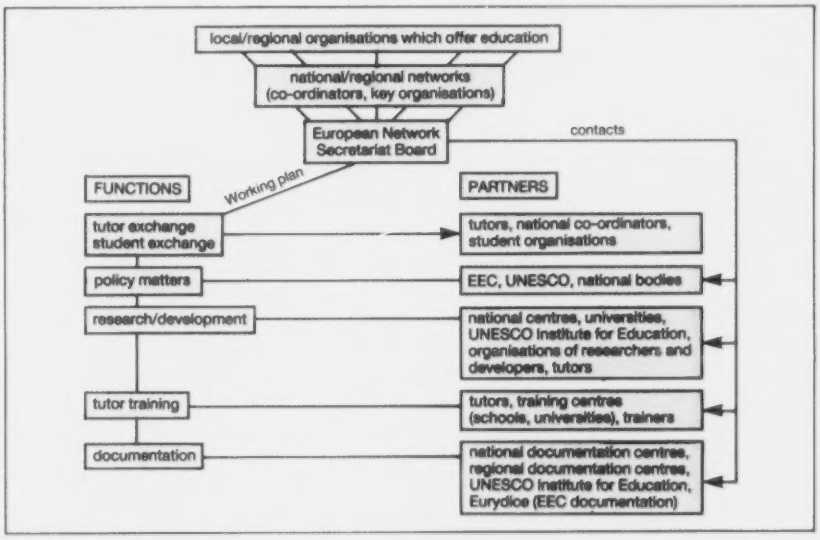
In the same year a draft working plan for the years 1989 and 1990 will be formulated. We hope to do this with the support of many workers in the field. Any suggestions are welcome.

Partners in the network

Who are the partners that together form this network? First of all, it must be supported by people and organisations engaged in adult basic education and literacy. In this sense it is a network of national networks. That is the way the working group is trying to locate key persons or organisations in the different countries or regions of Europe.

However, every function and every topic the network will deal with will have its specific partnerships. For exchange visits of tutors, local institutions that offer adult basic education and literacy to students are the partners.

For students' exchange, students and organisations of students are the partners. In dealing with matters of tutor training, tutors with their training needs, organisations that offer training and trainers will be the partners. For research, development and documentation, regional, national and international institutes are partners. Concerning policy matters, the EEC, national organisations for adult basic education and literacy workers and politicians can be partners. Schematically it could, for example, look like this:


local/regional organisations which offer education
national/regional networks (co-ordinators, key organisations)
European Network Secretariat Board
contacts
FUNCTIONS
Working plan
PARTNERS
tutor exchange student exchange
tutors, national co-ordinators, student organisations
policy matters
EEC, UNESCO, national bodies
research/development
national centres, universities, UNESCO Institute for Education, organisations of researchers and developers, tutors
tutor training
tutors, training centres (schools, universities), trainers
documentation
national documentation centres, regional documentation centres, UNESCO Institute for Education, Eurydice (EEC documentation)

Above all, it must be clear that every activity the network is undertaking will in the long run be for the benefit of students and tutors who make adult basic education and literacy a job worth doing. The Network must have the effect of improving the actual practice.

In September the working group hopes to present a working programme for the coming years and the partners are precisely described.

The secretariat of the working party is for the time being located at SVE. For information or helpful suggestions please contact Kees Hammink, SVE, P.O. Box 351, 3800 AJ Amersfoort, The Netherlands, telephone (0) 33-631114 or one of the national organisations mentioned.

Good Practice in Literacy and Adult Basic Education

How can the network contribute to good practice? In the context of the social and psychological situation of the students literacy and ABE are more than merely the acquisition of technical skills. In the light of practical experience gained in recent years it has become obvious that the quality of provision is a decisive factor in the success of literacy and ABE. To date, provision consists of several elements. In order to establish a link between people seeking help and literacy and ABE schemes there is a need for publicity which really reaches potential students. In order to build up a base of confidence betweeen students and tutors or organisers, the schemes have to provide initial advice of various forms. Owing to the fact that reading, writing, numeracy etc., are generally acquired by children it is important to take into account the situation of adult learners. Methods have to be carried out for providing basic education at various levels of knowledge, for different groups and under different institutional conditions. Social assistance is necessary for those students who live in precarious social conditions and, finally, there is a need for coping with psychological problems emerging from the experience of discrimination etc., by providing counselling.

All these elements of provision require good organisation and qualified staff capable of meeting the needs of adult learners. To date experience has shown that several feasible and innovative approaches have been developed in various countries of the European Community. Obviously, good practice in adult literacy and because of personal, social, economic and cultural changes ABE requires the continuous development of concepts and ideas, working material and methods as well as ways of organising and financing programmes.

One of the key elements required to cope with the changes emerging from different personal aspirations, from social needs and technological transformations is the field worker's experience. Staff training is therefore an important part of provision guaranteeing that the standard of practical work is maintained and raised. It is also worthwhile from organisational and financial points of view for the institutions of adult education.

International co-operation in staff training is not only a way of avoiding errors and problems, but a means of implementing new concepts, of developing innovative forms of provision and of evaluating feasible approaches.

The Students

Who are these adults who neither know how to read or write or else do so insufficiently? In a few European countries, those whom one first considers within the framework of 'literacy' courses are the immigrants. They have not been able to learn the language of their adopted country. In addition, many have not even had the chance to attend school in their country of origin and are thus equally illiterate in their native language.

But there are also illiterates amongst the native populations of our industrial countries (from 4% to 7% according to estimates) in spite of the long established laws making education obligatory. Primarily, we will discuss below the second category, generally discovered later but revealing a problem, in this case, which is altogether indigenous to our social system.

Evidence and research indicates that the difficulties of learning caused by particular circumstances such as deficient health, or an accident . . . only explain part of the case. Most people who were questioned did not have such handicaps and attended school. To a certain extent, it is therefore the scholastic institution which has 'produced' their illiteracy. In effect, the school and its standards are inadequate for the children of many families.

Many illiterate adults were in their youth, pupils who had not found their niche and felt rejected. The discrimination which they suffered manifested itself at certain periods of their learning but also in their attitudes to learning and their relationships with friends in class, etc.

Their home environment was organised according to values which were not recognised at school, as much in matters of work and knowledge as in respect of leisure. Abstract knowledge and writing did not play a large part in the daily or professional life of their parents or peers. For the children, these abilities did not seem relevant. Writing remained a code with no concrete application. One had to wait for a confrontation with social or professional responsibilities. "I never noticed my lack of knowledge of reading and writing before I was 14" explained one of them. "At that time, I had a job, distributing newspapers, I didn't know how to read the names of the streets".

As a consequence of the cultural void separating the school and the family, the latter did not intervene when scholastic difficulties appeared. Parents didn't understand the stakes involved and were also too intimidated by the teachers (having frequently themselves known an unsatisfactory education). They therefore gave up keeping themselves informed or laying claim to better control over their children's education. Faced with objectives and pedagogic methods which did not suit them, the child did not feel supported by anyone and often finished up by developing strategies to avoid writing, by withdrawn or aggressive behaviour.

As an adult, the importance of mastering writing becomes apparent through the needs of work; as the distributor of the newspapers explains above, in family life where one has in turn become a parent and where one hopes to help one's own children in their schooling; through difficulties of socialisation of all kinds; social skills, information for consumers, leisure, access to all of which depends on documents to be read, to be returned duly signed or simply to be understood in order to benefit from the services and possibilities offered.

Research has also been carried out into the obstacles which are most frequently met by illiterate adults and into the motivation which causes them to return to learning by enrolling in a literacy course. The increase in unemployment intervenes on the one hand, of course. Increasing one's chances of retaining one's job or finding work are amongst the most pertinent motivations. Dealing with one's own post, reading the paper, "like everyone else", are some of the others, which illustrate the variety of desires for social recognition and for rehabilitation which notivate numerous learners.

To end, let us add that over and above these elements of explanation painted with sweeping strokes and therefore very schematic, that which should also be noticed and which investigations also make most systematically evident is the diversity of situations, of routes and even of levels of competences envisaged (from sight reading to the mastering of the subtleties of spelling). It must be understood finally that an adult unsatisfied with his capabilities in the respect of writing may well have other abilities and in many cases can manage very well in life. That he is not necessarily a marginal.

"Mission Impossible?"

European countries on the whole have been slow to recognise the extent of adult illiteracy among their indigenous populations. It was felt that universal primary education would ensure a literate society. However in spite of years of formal schooling many people have not developed literacy skills. This illiterate minority largely remains invisible preferring to avoid situations where literacy is required and illiteracy exposed. For the industrialised world to admit to significant levels of illiteracy has meant a challenge to our educational systems and to our understanding of the rights and potentials of adults. During the 1970s some European countries took on the task of trying to eradicate illiteracy through mass campaigns and specially targetted projects. It soon became evident that problems with reading and writing could not be solved by short-term methods .but would require continual provision.

It is impossible to give accurate estimates of the extent of illiteracy in our countries. Part of the problem lies in the absence of an agreed definition of literacy/illiteracy and the 'required' levels. Is it, to be able to sign your name? to be able to respond to the demands of a society immersed in print? or to have the skills to manage one's own life independently?

The definition depends on the objectives of those who use or want a definition. In addition, methods of assessing levels of adult literacy are generally innappropriate, often inaccurate and frequently unacceptable to adults. The only thing we can say with any certainty is that the consumer demand from adults for opportunities to improve literacy skills increases every year. In a UK study carried out in 1981, 13% of the 23 year olds in the survey *reported* that they had experienced difficulties with reading, writing or numeracy since leaving school.

It is also impossible to calculate the real costs of illiteracy in our countries. However, it is evident that substantial costs are involved in having a workforce, which is only partially literate, that illiteracy adds to the pressures on our social welfare services and that misunderstood and wrongly completed official forms and written communications cause expensive delays and errors. Greatest of all the costs must be the incalculable costs of a lack of sense of personal worth among large sections of our populations, who as a direct result of their difficulties feel alienated from Society and less able to participate in the growth of their communities.

The group consists of the following organisations:

ALBSU, Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229-231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA, England.

Alfabetisering Vlaanderen. Gentsesteenweg, 58, 9330 Dendermonde, Belgium.

G.P.L.I., Groupe Permanent de Lutte contre l'Illettrisme. 8, avenue de Ségur, 75009, Paris, France.

Lire et Ecrire. 10, Avenue Clemenceau, B-1070 Bruxelles, Belgium.

NALA, National Adult Literacy Agency. 7 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1, Ireland.

PAS, Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle – Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, Projekt: Vermittlung elementarer Qualifikationen. Holzhausenstraße 21, 6000 Frankfurt 1, F.R.G.

SCEC, Scottish Community Education Council, West Coates House, 90 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5LQ.

SVE, Studie- en ontwikkelings-centrum voor Volwassenen Educatie. P.O. Box 351, 3800 AJ Amersfoort, The Netherlands.

In the next newsletter there will be information about the planning for International Literacy Year.

Dealing with Debt – 3 Steps to Help you Cope

by E. Force Wales, in association with Contact Wales.

Published by E Force Wales

Price: 20p for postage and packing

Obtainable from E Force Wales
Room 57 Gabalfa, B.B.C. Wales,
Cardiff CF5 2YQ

This 25 page booklet follows the Action Plan described in the B.B.C.'s Advice Shop programme on debt broadcast in January, 1988. It offers advice on devising a personal budget, saving money, obtaining benefits, tackling debt and what to do if taken to court. (The Scottish legal system is also covered). It provides an extensive list of agencies who might help, and practical suggestions on approaching them. Many forms of debt, including credit card, are mentioned, although more might be made of the dangers of small advertisements or loans illegally secured against benefit books.

Unfortunately, recent changes in the benefit system are not fully accounted for, so that some terminology is already outdated and requires modification.

The booklet is clearly designed for individual rather than group use. It has a firm, pragmatic and sometimes directive tone and a very blunt approach to the topic. For the A.B.E. client the uncluttered page layout, use of bold headings and varied type size, short paragraphs and simple vocabulary are certainly an asset. (Odd spelling mistakes may be charitably put down to printer's errors!). However, I do feel that the area of debt and money management is a sensitive one, where the written word alone is not enough. Sticking to a personal budget may require considerable support, particularly if numeracy and money concepts are weak and the booklet evades this a little.

Nevertheless E Force Wales have demystified often complex material and it is sad that parts of their booklet have become outdated so soon.

Sheila M. Bellamy
Community Education Co-ordinator
Rotherham College of Arts & Technology

Everyday Worksheets

Using . . . Newspapers
by Sheila Bower & Anne Buckey
Price £3.00 incl. p&p

Using . . . Mail Order Catalogues
by Linda Storey & Bridget Coates
Price £1.60 incl. p&p

Basic Skills Cards

Price £2.45 per set incl. p&p
£24.60 complete set incl. p&p

Published by PRU.

Available from 27 Harrogate Road, Leeds

Everyday Worksheets

These worksheets are presented in a pack of A4 sheets designed "to develop literacy and numeracy skills through the use of functional materials" i.e. newspapers and mail order catalogues. The sheets are marked with symbols to show the level of difficulty of each section overall. I was not impressed by the 'feel' and presentation of the two packs being untidy and cluttered. The initial pages for beginning readers in the 'using ... newspapers' pack I feel were patronising and too simplistic e.g. matching photographs of T.V. programmes to their titles, and photos of the Royals with their names etc. The worksheets for the developing and advancing readers were better, however, and I did feel the material could be used as a starting point for use with local newspapers.

The mail order pack had more relevant material and incorporated a whole range of literacy and numeracy skills in an adult and appropriate way. I much preferred these worksheets, especially the presentation although the poor quality of the photographs really detracted from enjoyment of the material. The coding for levels of difficulty is a really useful guide for tutors and would offer a good indicator of attainment to the student.

Basic Skills Cards

This series consists of 12 sets of work cards ranging from DIY to budgeting. Each pack has 12 double sided A4 cards in plastic wallets and in each section offers differing type set – 16 point for beginning readers and 12 point for developing and advancing.

I loved these cards! They offer relevant *adult* material in a consistent programme for students with specific skills/interests, and being skills-based offer a platform for building on existing knowledge. This is encouraged through the use of a whole range of learning concepts like word-search, cloze, matching etc. They could also act as a good medium for confidence building - the student could bring his or her own knowledge to the fore and maybe teach the tutor a thing or two!

The different type sets really do provide extra clarity without appearing childish or insulting.

I believe these packs would be a very useful resource in any ABE class.

Linda Evans
ABE Co-ordinator
Clwyd Education Authority

Pacers

by Constance Milburn

Published by Blackie Educational

Price: £1.75 each

These new full colour series of activity books will be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of our young special needs students, although they would not be suitable for adults.

The topics presented will be of interest to teenagers and the books are attractively presented. The covers are colourful and should stimulate interest in the contents.

As there are only 16 pages in each book, students will not lose interest in the topic. The content is well planned and the illustrations are clear, informative and well defined. The visual aid provided will help the student to improve standards of fluency in writing, reading skills and comprehension.

Other activities which will be encouraged by using the series are following the simple, clear instructions, thinking out, locating and classifying information, comprehension, retention, and a general widening of vocabulary. Writing, spelling, providing students with opportunities for drama and speech development and discussion will be encouraged and stimulated by the topics covered, eg holidays, sports, speed and danger.

These books will provide tutors with ideas and suggestions for extended projects and programmes of learning within and outside the classroom.

Sue Burgess
Co-ordinator of Adult Education
Isle of Wight Education Authority

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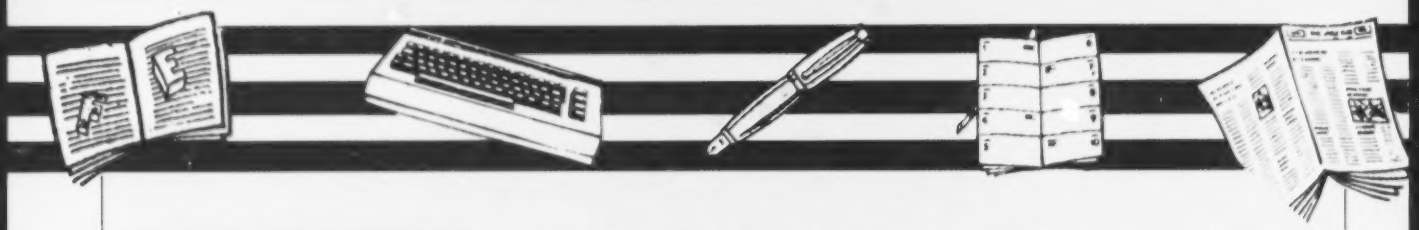

Housing the Poor

Votes for Women

The Slave Trade to the West Indies

by tutors in Oxfordshire Adult Literacy and Basic Education Scheme

Published by The Oxfordshire Books Project, Littlemore Further Education Centre, Sandy Lane West, Oxford OX4 5JY

Price 30p each

These three booklets are new titles in a series concerned with political issues in the recent past. They are designed for adult reading students and edited by professional basic education tutors in Oxfordshire.

Each gives a clear, concise background to the topic which is followed by a dialogue between an investigator and a witness or two individuals with opposite views.

There are many adult students who would welcome these accounts of our social history. They make a good basis for discussion.

Contemporary illustrations prevent the booklets from appearing too dry but students with whom I used them were not immediately drawn to them. Reading them within a small group they stimulated interest, leading us into a more detailed debate around current issues. Good value for money.

Six Bullets

by The Fairfield Writers and David Morgan

Published by Bedfordshire Education Service and Leisure Services, County Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP

Price £3.00

ISBN 0 907 041 760

Fairfield Hospital in Hertfordshire is one of the many psychiatric hospitals now attempting to break down the isolation of their patients and prepare them for a return to the community. Some of the patients have lived the major part of their lives there.

In 1984 it was suggested that the hospital should have a writer – in – residence as part of Eastern Arts Association's "Writers in the Community scheme". Two enthusiastic writers were appointed and with the support of the hospital librarian they generated a great deal of enthusiasm and hard work. Patients attended sessions of three hours in length at which they wrote, read and discussed their work. Broadsheets were produced and circulated and later they developed the confidence to read to a large audience. Funding was found to keep the group working and in 1985 Channel 4 filmed them.

Their writing is poignant and penetrating. "Six Bullets" is a collection of poems with contributions from patients and tutors which reaches out to the world beyond the institution. Their individual voices talk of pain and healing, darkness and light, violence and love, despair and hope.

Many psychiatric patients are understandably concerned that the community will not welcome them on their return to it. These poems articulate their fears and needs but also offer a positive basis for understanding and communication. For those of us working in other psychiatric hospitals they could be an invaluable contribution to the process of "finding a voice."

Between the Lines

by Monica E. Drury

Published by The Gatehouse Project, St. Luke's, Sawley Rd., Miles Platting, Manchester M 10 8DB

ISBN 0 906 253 24 1 *Price 95p*

These poems are very personal. It is good to hear so clear a voice but I would have preferred a more rigorous approach to the selection of the writing, which is very uneven.

The presentation is of a high order but I regret the sentimental nature of the illustrations and some of the poems.

Frances Hale
Adult Literacy Organiser
Barnet College
Barnet Education Authority

Basic English Skills

by Pat Horne & Mike Ouzman

Published by Hodder and Stoughton Mill Road, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent

Student's Book Price £3.60

ISBN 0 340 38961 6

Teacher's Book Price £6.00

ISBN 0 340 38960 8

"Basic English Skills" targets a specific audience – 16-19 year old college students working towards exams such as AEB Basic English and C & G Communication Skills. Graded exercises provide practice in listening skills, selection of key information, indexing, form filling etc. The section based on the spoken word looks particularly useful. The books are clearly intended to be used in a class situation with a teacher very much upfront and the teacher's book, which is essential, all but provides a script for each lesson. It goes into considerable detail on how the completed work should be marked. The tone is relentlessly school Marmish but that aside the authors are obviously well versed in the needs of this particular student group and have produced an attractive text book.

Although intended for college teenagers Basic English Skills could well be adapted for use with ABE students. The classroom approach is inappropriate but the section on listening skills could be used by an individual using a taped version of the teacher's spiel. Some of the material is unsuitable for those ABE students who are too long in the tooth to identify with the boys and girls in the text but I suspect that the short-coming might be more than counter balanced by the attractions of the rigidly prescribed marking system. I can think of more than one student who would approve of having every single 'i' dotted and 't' crossed however much his tutor might object!

In short this book is not ideal for ABE but there is enough in it to make it a useful addition to the book box.

Maggie Walker
Basic Education Co-ordinator
Reading Adult College
Berkshire Education Authority

Read-along Series

1. The Lost World
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Grade 6-8

2. Smiley's People
John le Carre Grade 7-9

51 titles with a reading range of reading levels from grade 3-12.

Available from: Ruskin Book Services Ltd. Unit 306, Hartlebury Trading Estate, Nr. Kidderminster, DY 10 4JB

Price £14.95 each.
Additional books for class use may be purchased at a cost of £7.00

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Each title contains a study guide, two tapes and a transcript book in clear easy to see print packaged in an attractive binder. Playing time 2-3 hours. The main story and the author's own words remain completely intact. Readers include James Mason, Susannah York, Dan Massey and John le Carre.

My first reaction to these two Read-Along packages was enthusiastic, although I felt the cost of using this material with a group would be beyond my scheme's means.

I gave the packs to some of my students to use at home. The students who were interested in the subject matter and who were able to read at this level felt that the pace of the reading on the cassette did not match their pace, and that they were either ignoring the tape and reading on ahead, or had stopped reading the text and just listened. The students felt that the combination of listening and reading at a pre-set pace took a skill they did not possess, and that this skill was not one they wished to develop, at their stage of reading ability.

Prime areas of interest for this product include ESL, where it might be more appropriate.

Georgie Sanders and students
Adult Literacy Tutor/Organiser
East Sussex Education Authority

Basic Skills: Arithmetic

by John Deft

Published by John Murray

Pupil's Book *£3.95* **ISBN 0-7195-4349-5**

Teachers' Resource Book *£12.50*
ISBN 0-7195-4356-8

The Students' book is designed to cover the work involved in the AEB Basic Arithmetic exam. It is split into 42 Units, each one concentrating on a particular arithmetical topic which is then subdivided into single skill sections. The sections begin with an instruction in how to use the said skill followed by an exercise of examples to try.

The layout of the book is good with reasonable print size and small cartoons to break up the text. However the actual content of the book is rather limited in its uses within Adult Numeracy as well as being particularly aimed at schoolchildren.

Though it starts with whole numbers the user would need to be fairly confident in the four rules and, possibly, some higher topics. As it is an exam course book it uses technical language plus some quite complicated topics are introduced at an early stage. Also many skills are given rather superficial treatment and would most likely require back-up work.

Another drawback is that you have to buy the Teachers' book for the answers. This book also includes more exercises to supplement the students' book, some revision papers based on the AEB exam plus a couple of pages of puzzles. It is presented on A4 sheets and spiral-bound for ready photocopying, though this does not include the answers.

Personally I cannot see much use for this book within Adult Numeracy as it offers nothing new and is restricted in its possible uses.

Mark Brown
Numeracy Project Worker
Richmond Adult & Community College
Richmond Education Authority

More from Brown and Brown

D.I.Y.Tips
ISBN 1 870596 08 0 *90p*

A Driving Test
ISBN 1 870596 11 0 *90p*

A Sports Quiz
ISBN 1 870596 10 2 *90p*

Household Tips
ISBN 1 870596 06 4 *90p*

Quiz and Tips Exercises
ISBN 1 870596 13 7 *90p*

Quiz About Town
ISBN 1 870596 09 0 *90p*

Use Your Eyes
ISBN 1 870596 14 5 *£1.25p*

A Household Quiz
ISBN 1 870596 07 2 *90p*

A Speller's Companion
ISBN 1 870596 15 3 *£1.80p*

Published by Brown and Brown
Keeper's Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ

This is a collection of A5 size booklets which, except for the 'Use Your Eyes' and 'A Speller's Companion' contain a number of quizzes or hints and tips about their topics. Students found them interesting, but a bit limited in that they can really only be used once. They make an enjoyable exercise, but might quickly end up in the back of the cupboard. They might encourage a group to look for similar things in newspapers, or even set up their own quiz team, but opinion was divided on whether they were worth 90p each. Although the booklets are pretty robust, they are also rather dull and not terribly well produced – the D.I.Y. book, for example, uses hand drawn illustrations.

'Use Your Eyes' and 'A Speller's Companion' are different. They share the other books' rather unappealing presentation, but 'Use Your Eyes' contains spelling proof reading exercises aimed at improving visual skills, and 'A Speller's Companion' is a miscellany of information about the English language. Both of these would make useful additions to a tutor's own library as well as the resources shelves.

All the books are printed on 100% recycled paper and that is certainly a sensible idea. Nevertheless, their overall dullness does count against them when a lot of Resource Sections or Audio-Visual Departments could produce something that looked better and would be cheaper.

The students and tutors of Newton Heath & Miles Platting Reading Clubs
Manchester Education Authority

The Way Through ('A Personal Journey Through the Maze of Literacy')

by John Johnson

Published by Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF

ISBN 0 9508988 4 8

Price: £1.50

This is a book about the personal experiences of a literacy student who first entered the "maze" of provision in 1969 before the major campaign for "A Right to Read" got under way. He joined the pioneering Cambridge House Literacy Scheme in South London starting with a volunteer tutor in the 1:1 style of provision which was to become the pattern for new schemes all over the country. Dropping in and out of different styles of provision as his confidence waxed and waned from 1969 – 1986 puts him in a unique position to comment initially on the "goods" that were on offer. As 'providers' we are ready to argue the case for the quality and

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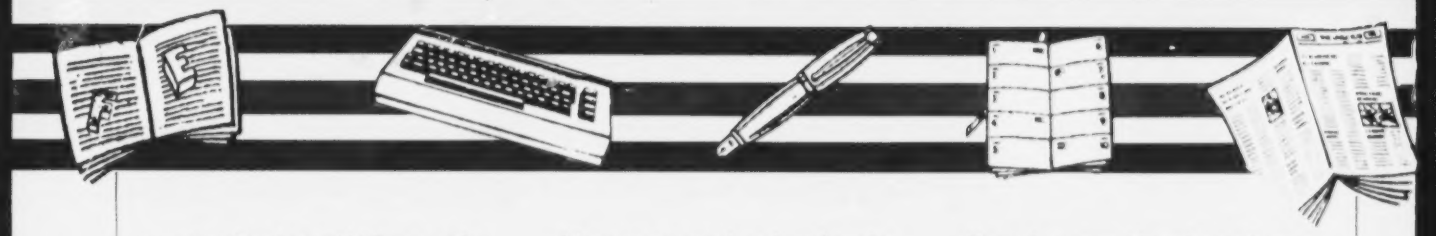

quantity of our 'wares' (different styles, methods and resources) but this testimony from one who has sampled the goods is refreshing and perhaps a more valid comment on our services. We cannot ignore it. We can learn from it.

A student agreed to read and comment on the book to help me. He was loath to part with my only copy when I returned to hear his views. It was important to him that it was 'real', a true account. He was able to identify with the experiences and understood. I have promised to return it when this review is done and it is clear that I must order more copies!

Yvonne Balakrishnan
A.B.E. Coordinator
Gwent Education Authority

Creative Writing in Group Work

by Robin Dynes

Published by Winslow Press

ISBN 0 86388 066 5

Price: £16.95

Available from Winslow Press, Telford Road, Bicester OX6 0TS

Thinking up new ideas for stimulating creative writing can be a difficult task and this book should provide some helpful suggestions for ABE tutors.

Ring bound so that it lies flat and colour coded in sections, the book is easy to handle and refer to. The instructions are clearly set out on each page and written in a positive manner under the headings -

Procedure - Discussion - Alternatives - Comment

Section 1 gives a general overview of group work and provides useful pointers on how to conduct a group session and how to overcome initial barriers to writing. I think, however, that some of our students may require a longer period for discussion before writing than Robin Dynes allows here, if they are to articulate their thoughts properly.

Sections 2 to 5 list the exercises for group activities on general and specific themes, arranged so that they can be used in isolation or linked from session to session. The first five exercises in each section have been earmarked as the easiest to tackle.

Section 6 outlines some helpful guidelines for producing a magazine or newspaper and looks at decisions to be made such as; choice of approach, cost, items to include and layout.

Although some of the exercises are geared to group therapy, the author having used them to good effect in the occupational therapy department of a psychiatric hospital, the book is certainly a handy resource for dipping into for ideas to 'trigger' writing and discussion and one that I would certainly recommend buying.

Margaret Morris,
Project Officer,
ALBSU/WJEC Student Writing Project in Wales.

Scribe Sistren

by Thandiwe Benjamin

Published by Centreprise Trust Ltd, 136 Kingsland High St., Hackney, London E8 2NS

ISBN 0 903738 72 4

Price: £2.45 Centreprise; £2.95 Elsewhere

This collection of poems takes its place among the burgeoning out-put of poems written in the oral tradition by Black British poets such as Linton Kwesi Jonson and Jean Binter Breeze. Some of them are written in dialect.

They essentially address the all-time question we constantly ask 'who am I?' They are landmarks in the poet's journey towards her present state of being, a stable, confident Rasta woman. In two of the poems she pays homage to Martin Luther King and Alice Walker. Many of the others are religious, sometimes prayers to her God, whom she recognises as the source of her true joy and hope. The poems are full of emotions and are very moving.

As the title suggests, she employs the medium to share her experiences particularly to her sisters irrespective of background and belief. However they appeal to a wider audience.

Those not familiar with Rastafarianism will gain some insight and knowledge about its cause and symbols. 'Red, Gold, Green and Black' (p9) informs about the colours and 'Blessed is the Child' (p53) explains the significance of the dreadlocks.

My favourite is 'Capture' (p30-1) The reader is enabled through her vivid descriptions to taste, see, feel, think and hear the experience of a girl, '...a maiden of thirteen rains,' about to be brutally captured from her people.

This particular poem offers a unique introduction to Black history.

I like the anthology. It would work well for our literacy students especially because of the growth experience involved. It could be used to study autobiographical writing or simply for discussion about the different stages in life and the points when we take stock and the kinds of influences which lead us to do so eg religion, friends, family and crises.

Phyllis Thompson
Literacy Co-ordinator
Hammersmith & Fulham CRE
Neighbourhood Literacy Scheme
Inner London Education Authority

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017.

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Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

Photo: Eddie Mapples

Working at Leeds Open Learning Communications Skills Centre. (See page 10)

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HOW SPECIAL ARE SPECIAL NEEDS?

Considerable discussion continues to take place concerning the place of special needs work in continuing education and its relationship to basic education. This is a particularly important discussion largely because adults with special needs have, until fairly recently, been neglected by adult and continuing education in the UK; a neglect that should shame us all.

Adults with special needs are not a homogeneous group and to take the view that they necessarily have anything in common is misguided. Educational and social neglect is often the only thing that unites a considerable number of very different people with a wide range of disabilities and handicaps. Many as children benefited relatively little from the education system and although things are improving, adults with special needs may have significant basic education needs because of poor or disrupted education.

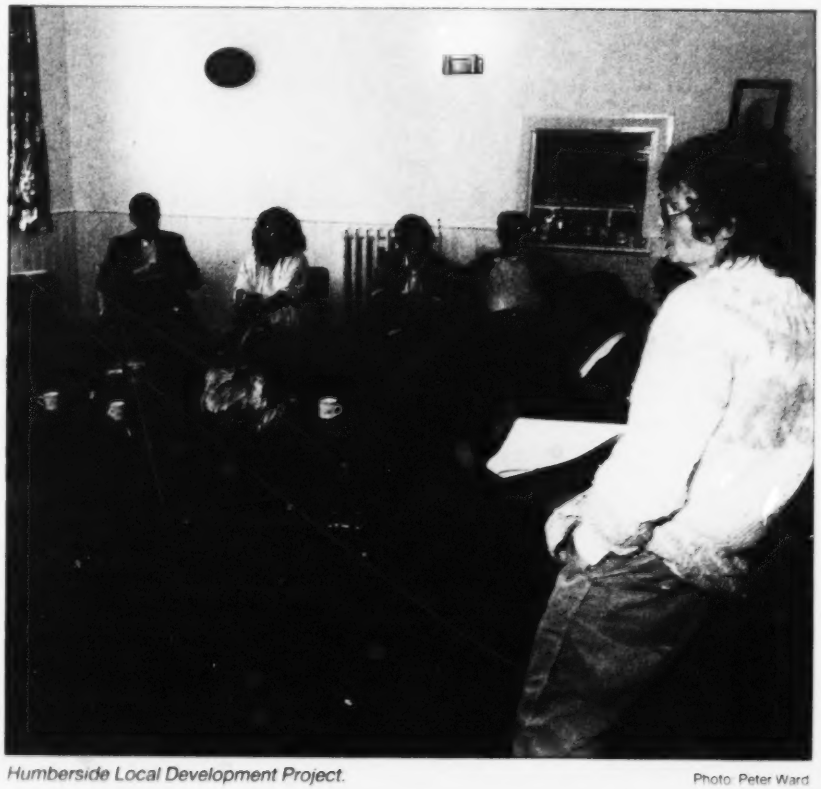
SPECIAL NEEDS AND BASIC EDUCATION

The place of special needs in the post school education system varies from authority to authority. In some areas it is seen as exclusively a part of basic education, and special needs work centres heavily on communication skills including reading, writing, speaking and listening. Adults and young people with special needs are either fitted into existing groups or specific groups and classes are established in Adult Training Centres or group homes. In the main, provision is concerned with adults who have a mental handicap, whether slight or severe, although other adults with special needs may take part in adult education classes.

Other LEAs have established Special Needs Sections. In the main where this is the case the range of special needs catered for is rather wider and may include adults and young people with hearing loss, partial sight, physical handicaps and disabilities, those suffering from mental illness, those with a mental handicap, the dysphasic, etc. Sadly, many authorities do not have any clear policy in relation to adults with special needs althouth the Education Reform Act does encourage, in explicit terms, the development of policy in this area.

It is pleasing, however, that many LEAs are giving particular attention to a whole range of special educational needs which do not fit easily into the normal further education categories and which would be unnecessarily penalised if they were treated on the same basis as more 'traditional' further education work. Partly this is due to colleges increasingly recognising that they will need to attract more people, young and old, to take advantage of the facilities they have available, at a time when colleges' traditional audience is declining. It also reflects an increasing commitment to the concept of community colleges and a desire to redress the neglect of some particularly disadvantaged groups which has too often typified our education system.

Basic education has long operated an 'open door' policy particularly as it has been a needs led, rather than demand led service. Thus, many individuals with special needs saw basic education as the appropriate part of the system to try to 'lock



Humberside Local Development Project. Photo: Peter Ward

onto'. Groups representing adults and young people with special needs were also often directed to basic education agencies and organisations rather than having their needs considered on their merits.

INTEGRATION

The involvement of adults and young people with special needs in basic education has not been without problems, however, particularly where schemes have attempted to integrate adults with mental handicaps into existing adult literacy groups. Partly this reflects a problem of principles being difficult to put into practice because of the perceptions of existing students. Thus, often the situation has occurred where a student from a group home or Adult Training Centre has joined an existing literacy group, for example, and has been accepted by the group. However, when more students with similar needs join the same group the original students begin to leave. It would be nice if this type of problem did not exist but all of the evidence available to ALBSU indicates that it is all too common and is difficult to deal with. Almost everyone supports integration but in practice much prejudice, and a good deal of understandable reluctance from basic skills students whose self image is already low, still exists. Moreover, special needs students often have their need for a wide-ranging and diverse education met by a part of the education service which necessarily concentrates mainly on communication skills.

EXISTING PROVISION

Being centrally concerned with basic education it is all too easy to forget that a considerable amount of educational provision for special needs students exists outside of basic education. For example, Richard Stowell, the former Director of SKILL: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities estimates* that there are over 6,000 young adults with special needs in further or higher education. Most of these students appear to be involved in provision designed specially for them and most seem to be young people with moderate learning difficulties. Most of the courses provided are intended to provide a 'bridge' to other educational opportunities or to jobs or to the Youth Training Scheme. (An additional 3,200 young people with special needs are estimated by Richard Stowell to be in YTS).

There are, however, considerable differences in provision made from area to area and from college to college and it's clear that, despite some progress in recent years too little is still being done. Certainly, unless colleges and Local Education Authorities establish sensible and realistic funding formulae for special needs work it may decline in the drive to maximise college income. Special needs provision is often, as Richard Stowell points out, more expensive than some other college provision although it is by no means the most expensive provision being provided. It does, however, need lower staff/student ratios and rather more support is needed in the form of materials and ancillary help and this needs to be recognised in determining funding levels.

This, of course, indicates the essential paradox facing many LEAs and colleges of further education. On the one hand they are being encouraged to meet the educational needs of a wide a range of groups and individuals in the local community (partly because of the decline in the number of young people and partly because of increasing recognition of the resource available); on the other hand many of the indicators suggested to judge efficiency are based on the lowest possible cost for the highest possible income. Income generation and traditional staff/student ratios rarely allow for the needs of disadvantaged groups; rather they weight an already unequal education service further in the direction of the advantaged and articulate.

It is clear that whilst only limited education provision exists for young people with special needs, what exists for adults is even more limited. Richard Stowell estimates that over 13,000 trainees in adult training centres receive some education in the centre provided by teaching staff sent out by colleges and the adult education service. However, much of the curriculum is fairly narrow and very real problems exist in attempting to ensure that what takes place has some relevance and is connected with the help provided by ATC instructors. Many basic education schemes provide this type of outreach tuition not just in adult training centres but also in hospitals, group homes and other sheltered workshops and accommodation.

The Paddington Integration Project, Beauchamp Lodge. Photo: Peter Ward

DEVELOPING SPECIAL NEEDS WORK

ALBSU believes that the needs of adults and young people with special needs should be a priority for the development of post-school education in the 1990's. These diverse needs will need to be met by a wide range of providers if a relevant and stimulating curriculum is to be offered. To see all of these needs as part of basic education is not, we believe, the most effective way to develop the provision needed and basic education will need to take an unselfish attitude and work closely with other providers. Certainly we acknowledge that a number of national agencies have a role to play in developing special needs provision and recognise that, while ALBSU needs to be 'one of the players' we are not necessarily best placed to take a lead role. It is our view that the future lies in recognising that Special Needs Sections need to be established in both further and adult education, responsible for providing diverse educational provision for adults and young people with a range of special needs. Clearly there will need to be close liaison between special needs sections and basic education schemes particularly as communication skills is going to feature as part of the curriculum for many (though not necessarily all) students with special needs. Moreover, wherever possible integration should be a central aim.

The 'open door' of basic education should never be closed, particularly as access to educational opportunities is still often denied to those who are least advantaged in our society. We need to ensure, however, that an 'open door' does not become a cul de sac because of our desire to attempt to answer all needs rather than acknowledge that in some circumstances other people and services have a rather more central role to play.

*Richard Stowell writing in the current issue of Vocational Aspects of Education

BASIC SKILLS ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE

In this article Leslie Morphy, Project Director of the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative, outlines the components of this major piece of developmental work.

The Purpose

The Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative is a joint venture between the BBC, ALBSU and the Training Agency. Its overarching aim is to increase the communication skills and numeracy of adults through the development of new learning opportunities. The focus of the Initiative is new certificates which will be supported by broadcasting and by print material directed both to the learner and to the tutor and trainer. These certificates will be developed over a period of two years across a number of levels. The communication skills certificates at the lower levels are being developed first for delivery from October 1989 with its higher levels and numeracy developed for initial delivery from October 1990. The Initiative is aiming to develop elements of competence within its certificate framework which underpin a wide range of occupations and voluntary activity. The aim is for groupings of these elements to form units within the National Council for Vocational Qualifications' framework, representing fundamental aspects required for competent performance in many occupations.

Background

The BBC and ALBSU have worked together since ALBSU's inception in 1980. The most recent joint venture resulted in the "Spelling It Out" programmes with their accompanying print material. The possibility of some kind of more sustained broadcasting activity in the adult basic education field has formed a sub-plot to the two organisations' dialogue. Any such activity needs to be met with new provision and to reflect the needs of adult learners at least into the early years of the next decade. The Training Agency is the other party with ALBSU and the BBC steering this Initiative. The Training Agency had set in motion accreditation for those on YTS and ET schemes and had been exploring the issues surrounding accreditation of skills including literacy and numeracy which underpin vocational qualifications.

Linking broacast material with an accreditation process provides new possibilities of sustaining broadcasts past the point of transmission for adult basic education. It also reflects demands for recognised qualifications from learners and potentially absorbs developments taking place in education and training.

Development Work on Accreditation

Initial work on appropriate accreditation was undertaken in the summer of 1988. A survey of existing certification including national certificates and local accreditation schemes was undertaken. The impact and significance of NVQs was explored. Suggestions for appropriate certification and a system of delivery were examined.

Any developmental work on accreditation needs to be seen in the context of its validity for individual learners. It also needs to have currency and credibility with those to whom the resulting certificate is presented, whether they be employers or gatekeepers to further education and training. External pressures in employment patterns, partly influenced by technological change and demographic structure, shape the education and training process and demand change within it. Some of the changes arising from these pressures are already being effected and they have informed the process of developing the new certificate.

The delivery system for education and training and for adult basic skills within this is affected by other shifts. The balance between private, statutory and voluntary providers of adult basic education is not a static one. Adult basic education takes place in a range of different settings. Not only do economic pressures demand that skills and qualifications gained in one context be recognised in another, but individuals need skills and qualifications which are capable of transfer between different occupations and between non-vocational and vocational settings. Many qualifications in the past have essentially been designed to prepare people for work where the role performed and the knowledge required would remain relatively static over a long period. Those who have been involved in teaching adult basic skills know all too well the harm that has been done to individuals in the past through failure in a qualification system which all too often left people knowing what they could *not* do. This knowledge has also informed the development process.

Developmental work on the new certificates is taking place with these general issues and trends in the background and with the overhaul of the vocational qualification system in the foreground. The certification has at its core a range of competences which it is intended should have transfer value between education and training, between non-vocational and vocational contexts and between occupations. The certificates are not therefore designed to depend on any single course curriculum or syllabus. They will be rooted in what the learner can do and assessed on the basis of a portfolio of work accredited locally and moderated. The certificates are being developed across four levels, allowing for progression through and out of basic education. Each level will contain three modules: reading, writing and oral/non verbal communication. The differentiation of level is reached through the complexity of the task or unfamiliarity of the environment rather than through any differentiation in the communication process itself. Each module contains a series of key words or phrases which represent the communication skills processes to be assessed.

The Broadcasts

Broadcasting will play a dual role in the Initiative. Firstly it will support the certificates with programmes which reflect the communication skills, and later numeracy, processes embodied in them. It will provide examples of a range of contexts within which the same aspects of communication appear as well as developing strategies for aspects of becoming a competent writer, reader, listener or speaker. They will also reflect good practice in teaching communication skills. However broadcasting will also have a role outside that of supporting the certificate. Some of the broadcasts will be transmitted in peak time and are therefore likely to attract a large audience, many of whom may recognise problems with and need to improve their communication skills but who would not wish formally to pursue this outside watching the television programmes. The broadcasts therefore have an important role in their own right in

confidence building and in providing strategies for learning.

This is not an initiative like "Spelling It Out" resting within one production department of the BBC. Broadcasts on both national and local radio will support the Initiative. Their role will be similar to television's to the extent that "motivational" elements will be broadcast to large audiences on Radio 1 and/or Radio 2 and more instructional programmes on Radio 4. Radio will be particularly useful in exploring listening/speaking skills and in providing support for tutors and trainers. A number of short stories are also being commissioned to be broadcast and to be published in print and on cassette.

Television Programme Timetable 1989/90
Communication Skills Level 1 and Level 2
Working Titles: Wordpower, Wordpower Plus

Series I – Eight ten minute programmes

Tranmission time:	6.15pm
Channel:	BBC1
Transmission dates:	Sunday 8 October to Sunday 3 December, 1989

Series II – Twenty 25 minute programmes

Transmission time:	Sunday morning
Channel:	BBC1
Transmission dates:	Sunday 19 November to Sunday 10 December, 1989
	Sunday 14 January to Sunday 25 March, 1990
	Sunday 22 April to Sunday 20 May 1990

Validation

The certificates will initially be awarded through City and Guilds who are working with the Initiative to develop appropriate assessment guidelines. However we will, in the longer term, be looking to involve other awarding bodies in the accreditation process. The intention is that the units developed and individual statements of competence should be publicly available through NCVQ's data-base.

Delivery of the Certificate

The certificates should be available through a range of different outlets and organisations. These include further education colleges, adult basic education schemes, through work-based training, Employment Training and YTS. They should be capable of delivery through Open Learning and through other courses. Open Learning has a central role in the Initiative. The Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, agreed to allocate an Education Support Grant of £3,000,000 to set up some 60 Open Learning Centres in England and Wales in response to proposals put to him by ALBSU and the BBC. These Open Learning Centres represent new provision and will provide support for learners additional to existing provision. Open Learning Centres and other learning support centres could also play an important part in the process of accrediting prior learning, in helping learners to recognise and place value on previously gained skills and in transferring their communication skills competence in one context to a different one.

Materials Development

The Initiaitive will directly sponsor and produce some print material. The production of some new adult reading material, mentioned above, will be one result. A leaflet is being designed to be sent out following the broadcasts of television and radio which will identify communication skills that people need and use in many contexts and help the reader to identify his or her own use and needs. It will also give information on learning opportunities which are available. In addition material for those who wish to practise and develop skills and follow up themes from the television programmes will be published. The Initiative has a role in acting as a catalyst for the production of material by commercial publishers and through other organisations, both for learners and for those supporting learners.

Access for Learners

The kind of referral services which have been implemented for programmes from "On The Move" in 1975 to "Spelling It Out" thirteen years later have assumed that basic skills students will largely be supported through l.e.a. or community-based literacy and numeracy schemes. Opportunities for basic education learning are spread across a shifting picture of private, public and voluntary provision. The design of this accreditation process allows the possibility of gaining a basic skills qualification through an entirely different course. The combination of these two factors limits the appropriateness of previous broadcasting based referral services. The single point in each local education authority to which students responding to television broadcasts have been referred in the past has purchase over only a proportion, albeit an important proportion, of provision which could support a learner. A central telephone service's responsibility in this Initiative will be to take down names and addresses of callers prior to sending them the leaflet mentioned above. Part of the function of this will be to give people an idea of the range of learning opportunities available and what they mght expect from them. Callers will also receive a list of local providers with an indication of what kind of support would be available through each. Any national referral/information service can only perform a limited role. The importance of local information and promotion to back up, supplement and inform will be well known to all those who have had previous experience with national broadcasting projects.

Proposed Certificate Framework for Communication Skills Level I

Level I is a survival level intended to develop communication skills which deal with the most basic demands of life and work and to be an entry point to Level I NVQs. A description of part of one module is set out below. The other draft modules are available from BSAI, 8th Floor, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA.

Oral/non-verbal communication

The general set of behaviours which result in face to face or telephone communication, without the help of written words, but including body language and other subtleties of non-verbal communication as well as the use of words. Speaking and listening are not separated in this model.

Five categories have been derived:

- conversing
- explaining
- enquiring
- reassuring
- passing tests

Category 1 – Conversing

Unfocused encounters between the person and others where the function of the communication remains to be identified, or is simply supportive to the atmosphere of the place where it happens.

Demands

- greeting customers/enquirers
- using the appropriate manner
- making telephone calls
- receiving telephone calls

Standard of Performance

Carrying out a conversation with an other, in which it is clear that:

- the person is aware of the contextual requirements of the conversation
- the person has an overall (perhaps organisational) objective for the conversation
- the person succeeds in achieving this
- the person shows sensitivity to any questions or uncertainties on the part of the other.

NUMERACY – ABSTRACT ART OR BASICALLY BORING?

How do we draw out the concepts, patterns and connections in number work? Sarah Oliver, Numeracy Organiser and Fresh Start Tutor at Fulham and Chelsea Adult Education Institute, argues the case for demystifying maths, and offers lively examples of activities to develop this approach.

Starting Points

The ideas for numeracy activities outlined below are based on the following premises:

- There is no intrinsic difference between maths and numeracy.
- Numbers are at the heart of mathematics.
- Numbers are abstract.
- Most people (including numeracy tutors) neither understand numbers nor counting.

The above points are all arguable. What is not arguable is the degree of success achieved by exploring number rather than railway timetables.

The activities described below took place over several weeks with a mixed ability group after an initial discussion to establish that:

- Maths is a powerful language that is easily abused by both tutors and students to make others feel inadequate.
- Maths induces feelings of intense anxiety or panic which block learning.
- The conceptual nature of maths makes it more difficult both to learn and to teach than any other subject.

The aims of the activities were:

- To reduce maths anxiety to a tolerable level.
- To establish the difference between concrete and abstract (on the grounds that basic skills students have as much right to put labels on what goes on inside their heads as anybody else does).
- To present thought-provoking problems that could be achieved by every student regardless of their mathematical ability and in which nobody could make others feel inferior.

The overall aim was that students should be, literally, turned on to number.

Activities

Mathematical Thinking Exercise

Students are asked to write down as many different numbers as possible using only the digits 1, 2, 3 and 4 in different combinations. Each digit is to be used exactly once in each number.

I suggest tutors try this activity themselves and note their own reactions. The point should then be obvious. (Think about anxiety level and method rather than 'right' answers).

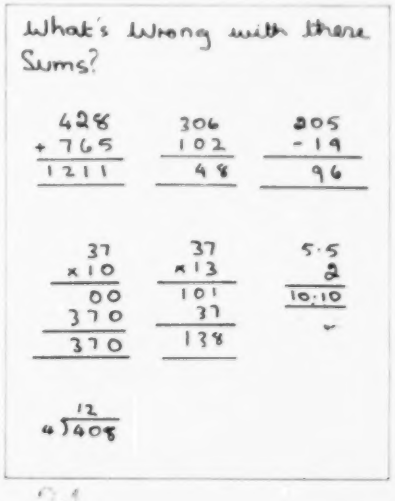
Counting and Measuring Exercise

This exercise involves pretending to be a cave person. Essential teaching aids are some sticks and a pile of beads of varying size and colour. I have been consistently surprised by how much maths (as well as madness) emerges from it. The aim is to establish the need for both counting and measuring, the different use of number that each makes, (one is discrete, the other is continuous) and a diagrammatical means of expression for each.

Students are asked to imagine that they are living several thousand years ago. What would they need numbers for? It is not difficult to elicit the responses of counting and measuring. There is then a choice of directions to follow. Students can sort the beads by size or colour, establishing sets and allotting values, leading to notions of money. The sticks, (as well as hands, feet and other parts of the anatomy) are used to measure the room, the window ledge, a book. Since everyone arrives at different answers, the idea of a standard measure emerges and the degree of accuracy of that measure may be questioned. The stick can be marked off at arbitrary but equal intervals to make it more accurate. The first time I did this exercise, as I enthusiastically asking probing questions about the difference between counting beads and measuring with sticks, the beads flew in all directions. Their discreteness was readily proved in the process of scrabbling around the floor to pick them up. I'm not sure that it is necessary to be quite so dramatic.

Once the difference between beads and rulers is established, the steps towards abstraction are taken. Both the set of beads and the number line can be drawn and symbolic notation attached. The doors are then wide open and it is up to the students to walk through them. I simply asked what questions people had about the number line. I was stunned by the reaction: "Where does it end?" "What happens between 1 and 2 or 3 and 4?" "What happens before 0?". All these questions were spontaneous with no tutor prompting. Basic numeracy students had made a mental leap from a piece of wood to the essence of number. (Interestingly, the same approach with a GCSE Maths class met with blank incomprehension).

Spot the Mistakes Exercise



This is an exercise often used on tutor training courses. I can't think why it never occurred to me to use it with students before now. The change in emphasis from making the mistake to spotting it acts as a perfect low-anxiety stimulus for instigating discussion and for investigating arithmetical processes.

Comparison of Number Systems

The sophistication and conceptual difficulty of the place value counting system should not be under-estimated. Most people think that they can count but very few can explain how it works. A useful way of introducing place value is by presenting students with different notations and asking them to identify the differences. The zero symbol, the unique digit symbols and their repetition are easily spotted, although they may need prompting. This exercise is valuable both as an introduction to place value and to demonstrate that:

- Our counting system is not an immutable law.
- Numbers are distinct from their symbolic representation.

ROMAN	EGYPTIAN	BRAHMI	HINDU-ARABIC
			0
I	I	—	1
II	II	=	2
III	III	≡	3
IV	—	⊀	4
V	𓆐	⊦	5
VI	𓆐I	⊧	6
VII	𓆐II	⊣	7
VIII	𓆐III	⊦	8
IX	𓆐—	⊃	9
X	∩	∝	10
XX	∩∩	∘	20
L	∩|	J	50
C			100

Times Tables Investigations

The times table (or lack of them) is a major stumbling block. They are both abstract and boring. There are two possible approaches: pretend that they are dispensable or confront them with some highlighter pens and a tables square. I prefer the latter approach.

The students are first asked to highlight the square numbers (4, 9, 16, etc). The symmetry is immediately apparent in the diagonal that cuts across the table. These numbers can be drawn, making concrete visual sense of them.

All the numbers to one side of the diagonal can then be blocked off with a different coloured highlighter since they are simply mirror images. This immediately halves the amount of information to be learnt. The process of highlighting is continued through the two, five and ten times tables, on the grounds that their pattern is regular and therefore easy to learn. The students can highlight any other known products. The pattern in the nine times table and the finger counting method can be demonstrated. (See Refs).

The times tables are thus broken down from a daunting array of numbers to a learning task of manageable proportions. This task does not have to be a rote exercise. Factors and divisibility tests can be introduced. There is something more intrinsically satisfying about breaking numbers down than building them up. (In much the same way as demolishing a brick wall brings more immediate rewards than building one). Eventually, the primes will be noticed, the most awkward and exciting of all numbers, and the Sieve of Eratosthenes* can be tackled. Investigation of the times tables leads to exploration of pattern and mathematical tricks. It is an important ingredient in lowering anxiety and enabling students to gain control over number.

X	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
3	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30
4	4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40
5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
6	6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60
7	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70
8	8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80
9	9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	90
10	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

Square numbers

Conclusion

Maths, at any level, is about establishing connections, patterns and generalisations. We as tutors must develop our own mathematical awareness if there is to be any hope of developing adult numeracy beyond the present mundane investigations of notional mortgage repayments that are the basis for most adult numeracy materials. Our aim should be to demystify maths. Exploring number is an essential part of that process.

The activities above could not be used with students with moderate or severe learning difficulties – an entirely different and much more concrete approach is necessary.

References

1. Idea adapted from *Project Mathematics Update* – Open University, Centre for Mathematics Education 1988.
2. Idea taken from *Mathematics for Everyman* Laurie Buxton pub. Dent 1984.

Essential Reading

Do You Panic About Maths? Laurie Buxton.

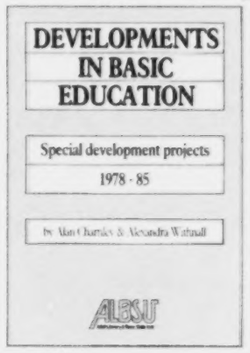
Numbers. Their History and Meaning. Graham Flegg. p. 108 for nine times table by finger counting.

Thanks to Pat Healy of Lewisham AEI, a fellow student on the RSA Teaching and Learning in Adult Basic Education course, for the inspiration which led to the Counting and Measuring exercise.

*The "Sieve of Eratosthenes" is in most standard modern school textbooks.

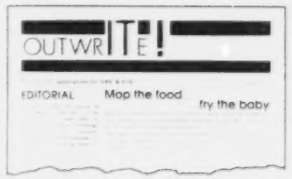
New publications

Copies of the new **Publications Catalogue** are available, free, from the Unit.



Developments in Basic Education *by Alan Charnley and Alexandra Withnall* looks at lessons drawn from special development projects sponsored by ALU and ALBSU between 1978 and 1985. It provides a valuable overview on key issues including publicity, types of provision and structure.

£2.50. Postage and packing 1 copy 46p, 5 copies £2.60, 10 copies £3.30.



Outwrite!

A newsletter produced by WRITE, the ALBSU-funded Special Development Project at the Inner London Educational Computing Centre. The newsletter aims to share ideas on practical IT applications in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL teaching. If you wish to receive future issues, please write to: **Freda Hollin, OUTWRITE! ILECC, John Ruskin Street, London SE5 0PQ.**

Letter

Dear Editor

The article on the Education Reform Act in the Winter 1989 Newsletter brought to mind the situation in the USA, where pupils who fail to meet the standards for the "attainment tests" are prevented from progressing through school normally.

Unfortunately the testing does not stop when the child leaves school. When we visited an ABE unit in New York, we found that the first thing that happens to students volunteering for adult basic education classes is that they are presented with exactly the same attainment test which they consistently failed on at school. And in many cases, where courses are funded from private sources, the same tests are administered after every fifty hours' tuition, to satisfy the funding body that "progress" is being made.

The tutors we spoke to in the States were profoundly dissatisfied with the system they were obliged to operate. And they seemed to spend a great deal of their time scouting around prospective funding bodies to enable courses to take place at all. Is this the road along which we are travelling?

Janet Leonard
ALBSU Special Development Project Worker

Note: we received a number of letters responding to articles in Newsletter No. 32. Keith Topping, Director of the Paired Learning Project in Kirklees, drew attention to two relevant articles: 'Training family and friends as adult literacy tutors' Journal of Reading Volume 31 No. 5 and – W.H.I.C.H. Parental Involvement in Reading Scheme' Language and Literacy edited by Neil Mercer, Open University.

Assessing Reading

by Judy Vaughan

A pack containing 30 cloze passages at three levels of difficulty which can be used to help identify whether an adult learner will be able to cope, independently, with different course or occupational materials. The pack also contains a handbook explaining how to use the passages and giving guidance on cloze procedure. This pack is appropriate for use in Employment Training and YTS.

£4.00

Information

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 1990 as International Literacy Year (ILY).

ALBSU's aims for 1990

- to raise awareness of the need for adult literacy provision in England and Wales
- to inform about the nature of adult literacy needs, in our society.

ALBSU's role during 1990

- to plan and organise its own activities
- to co-ordinate the activities of other organisations which are likely to promote interest in literacy work in England and Wales
- to provide information and encourage local schemes to take advantage of ILY by mounting events.

ALBSU as Organiser

Since it is likely to be more effective to have activities clustered around particular themes, rather than trying to sustain interest for the whole year, activities will be planned around themes at key periods during the year:

- **Work and literacy** – January 1990
  The theme would be the importance of literacy in the workplace.
- **Youth and literacy** – May 1990
  The theme would be the importance of literacy in the lives of young people.
- **Parenting and literacy** – October 1990
  The theme would be parents and children working together on reading.

ALBSU as co-ordinator

Many organisations will want to mark International Literacy Year. To avoid major clashes of dates and to provide overall co-ordination ALBSU has convened a group of representatives of organisations which are likely to be planning activities concerning literacy in the U.K. We are delighted that Lady Plowden has agreed to chair this group.

ALBSU as provider of information

ALBSU has produced the first of a series of information papers for local schemes regarding International Literacy Year, which was circulated at the end of April.

As well as providing more detailed general information about ALBSU's role during 1990, there are suggestions of activities that might be undertaken locally. Further copies are available from ALBSU on receipt of a large stamped addressed envelope.

ROYAL PATRON

We are pleased to announce that, at the invitation of Lady Plowden, Chairman of ALBSU's Co-ordinating Committee for International Literacy Year, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal has accepted the position of Patron of International Literacy Year 1990.

Letter

Dear Editor

I would be grateful if I could use the letters page in the ALBSU Newsletter to report back on a discussion that began with a question from the floor at the ALBSU Conference in May 1988 addressed to David Tinsley, Director of the Training Standards Advisory Service of the (then) MSC (now the T.A.).

Mr Tinsley had described with great thoroughness the procedures by which staff in his service monitored MSC activities and I would like to state that in raising the question then and in developing it as I do now is not to imply any underestimation, on my part, of what his service achieves.

However, at the Conference it did seem to me that *explicit* examples relating to the monitoring of literacy and numeracy provision were missing from Mr Tinsley's input. In order to clarify this, I therefore found myself raising the question from the floor regarding the granting of Approved Training Organisation (ATO) status to YTS Training Managers: my evidence locally was that the whole area of literacy/numeracy provision was not explored when Training Managers sought ATO status and since Mr Tinsley had given his time to address an audience that would by definition be particularly interested in this area of work, I wondered if there was a mismatch between the national emphasis put on literacy/numeracy provision in YTS and the emphasis in my locality.

The reply confirmed, in fact, that the ability to provide literacy/numeracy was *not* one of the criteria researched before granting ATO status. But Mr Tinsley then invited me to write to him to enlarge upon the question I had raised – which invitation I followed up. I was, and still am, not happy when reassured that 'quality' will be monitored without being told what definitions of 'quality' will be used and how they will be identified and measured. I hoped that this correspondence would provide some answers as to how this was going to be tackled in the context of YTS.

In the period between then and now I have written to and received a number of letters from both Mr Tinsley and other TA staff at Moorfoot. I suspect that as far as the TA staff are concerned, the correspondence is now closed and so I am using the medium of this letter to report what I have discovered. The essence of the TA's conclusions are encompassed, I believe, in the following quotes from two of the letters I received.

(i) "ATO was developed as a generic concept, that is, it is intended to apply to all entrant providers of YTS. It would be out with the design concept to include criteria relating to specific elements.

(ii) The post ATO mechanism for quality assurance is the Development Plan which can be used for the development of particular schemes, including, of course, literacy and numeracy.

Concerning the monitoring of the quality of provision under the new funding arrangements for Initial Training in YTS, there is, as John indicates, a requirement on schemes to have a self review process based on the Development Plan.

Alongside the regular monitoring of such plans by Area Office staff, TSAS undertakes in depth reviews of individual schemes which will, where appropriate, highlight specific quality issues, including the provision of literacy and numeracy tuition".

It leaves me confused. I have not, as far as I can tell, been successful in eliciting the criteria which are/will be used in setting up and monitoring quality in the literacy/numeracy provision in YTS – though I have been assured that this area of work is in hand. Details, I am afraid, remain elusive.

Am I alone in becoming increasingly worried about developments in this field of work, both in YTS and in ET? (It is a rhetorical question – I know the answer). The plethora of training packs and work sheets being produced are on the one hand really exciting in that they indicate a growing awareness of the existence of the need. But on the other hand they are quite terrifying in that they could so easily be misused. To some extent it reminds me of the mid 1970's when volunteers were offered twelve hours' training and then (in the geographical areas I knew at least) were "partnered" with "their" students and more or less expected to be able to get on with the the task. Only in the cold light of experience have we become ever increasingly aware not only of the fact that volunteers are only as good as the level of support they receive but also of the amount of support this actually has to be.

I am not confident that the above mentioned training packs and worksheets are not a repeat showing of the mid 70's film implying an expectation that YTS and ET staff can thus be encouraged to try to get on with the task, too.

How many trainees are going to be offered well intentioned but, at best, unconfident or, at worst, incompetent help before more open communication takes place between the TA staff and those of us who have a little experience we are keen to share?

But perhaps my increasing disquiet is totally unfounded, and is merely born out of the ignorance in which the TA seems to want to keep us. If that is so, I am sorry to have to report that despite my protracted correspondence with the Training Standards Advisory Service of the TA, questions continue to remain unanswered in my mind.

Janet Ash, County Co-ordinator ABE, Gloucestershire
(Writing in a personal capacity)

The Open Learning Centre

Photos Eddie Maples

SETTING UP AN OPEN LEARNING CENTRE

Making basic education more open and flexible is a key area of development work at present. In this article Sue Pulis and Jenny Pearman, the full-time workers at the South Leeds Open Learning Communication Skills Centre, highlight the practical and theoretical issues they have worked on in the early stages of setting up an inner city Open Learning Centre.

October 1st, 1988 – day one. The ground floor of a once small sixth form block . . . empty, undecorated rooms – and enthusiasm! A day of meetings consisting of huge sheets of paper and scribble. The ball was rolling . . .

"We'll open a month from today."

"It'll never be ready."

"It'll have to be."

Where do we begin to set up an Open Learning Centre?

Our interpretation of open learning had to be transformed from interview jargon to a working reality. Defining our long term aims and philosophy of the project helped us to identify practical tasks and issues that would be addressed over the next six months.

What is Open Learning?

For us, it implies as free an access as possible for all adults to express their educational needs and to have these met at the times and by the method of their choice. As a result opening is all day, everyday, Saturday mornings included. We decided, also, to open for a "twilight" session from 4.30 – 7.30pm, as well as standard evening openings. Students do not need to attend specific sessions but within opening hours can attend as little or as much as they choose.

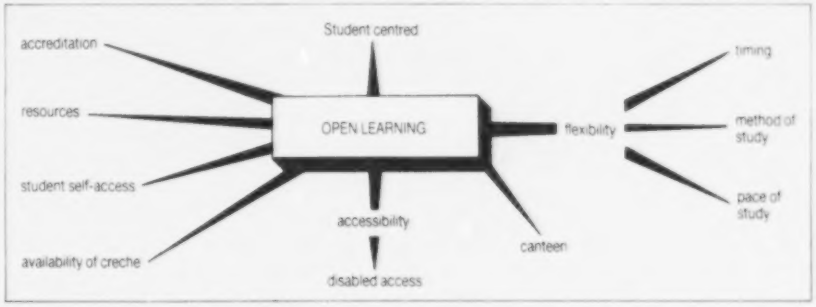
Open Learning also means freedom to choose the method of study, 1:1, by group tuition or by distance learning or a combination of methods.

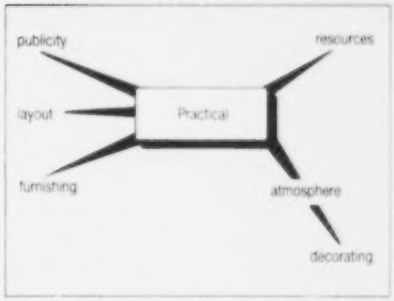
Part of this ease of access is accompanied by free creche and cheap canteen facilities but also by the provision of an integrated service, by bonding links with welfare and educational advice agencies, so that the difficulties, which might block a return to study can be alleviated and students offered alternative options, if these are more appropriate.

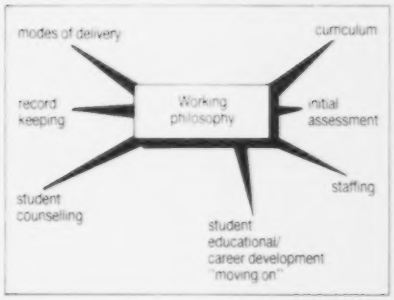
The range of areas of study is also important. Our intention is not just to offer Literacy and Numeracy skills tuition, English and Maths work to certificate level, at all sessions but to provide a range of other activities. Computer assisted learning, basic word processing and computer literacy are available at all sessions too. Along with this, we offer specific group and 1:1 teaching for word processing and computer skills at a higher level.

Ideology to Practicality

We decided to concentrate on main key areas. They fell into two distinct groups:







Irritatingly but inevitably the practical areas took the bulk of the time. By our opening day, we felt we had laid the barest foundations of the working philosophy of the project. In retrospect its incomplete state was productive as the areas originally highlighted provided the fundamental framework in working towards "success" and became the backbone in building a team ethos for a centre, in its infancy, involving a number of highly skilled staff.

Getting Started

The practical aspects of turning a physical void into a friendly, relaxed yet professional, adult learning environment were obvious. What we were faced with was an ex-cookery room and our own resources. The lack of time and the management of this process became the biggest hurdles in the four weeks prior to opening.

Adopting all the strategies for effective use of time, the writing and systematic crossing through lists of innumerable tasks became overwhelming. Some days we felt we had achieved little but frustration and a longer list.

The Building

Now a tertiary building, the centre is situated on the ground floor. It is close to the city centre and is in the heart of a densely populated, multi-racial area with social and educational needs, exacerbated by high unemployment (almost 60% among the Bangladeshi community) and a large number of one parent families. There is a low uptake of adult education provision, normally.

Our intention was to change the approach, facilities and provision so as to appeal to those to whom traditional adult education is unacceptable. The intense feelings of rejection on re-entering an educational environment that may have failed is so daunting a prospect that our centre had to be in direct contrast to anything experienced before by students.

As a result we decided to go for an "up market" image believing that a positive centre identity was crucial in promoting a raised status for potential ABE students.

Layout

We needed to spend time co-ordinating a colour scheme for carpets, blinds, screens, noticeboards and walls, which would stimulate learning in a calm atmosphere and would yet appeal to all target groups. Minute details like the purchase of plants became a part of this.

To avoid the problems of new students being intimidated by the presence of existing students in the centre, we split our space into workshop area and an office/ reception/student counselling room.

Our reception is the first room in the building any visitor will see and is well sign posted. The appointment of a friendly, relaxed but efficient clerical assistant has been invaluable to us in encouraging new students and tempting those who might have entered the building for other purposes, such as employment training.

We decided on a casual seating area in the corners of both workshop and office to promote effective, private initial interviews but also, in the case of the workshop, to enable students to talk to a tutor privately about the personal or work issues they might need to explore.

Display of resources and choice of furniture also posed problems, which related directly to the delivery of the provision. We needed a group area, perhaps semi-screened but also space for students to work 1:1 with tutors. Round tables were chosen for this purpose because we needed social interaction between students, despite their widely differing activities, avoiding the isolation which might have come with much 1:1 working.

Our rooms looked huge whilst empty, but six months into the project the space is used to its last inch. Light, flexible screens have proved a necessity as, almost fortnightly, we find a better way of utilising valuable space. Something to bear in mind, when purchasing furniture, is its adaptability and ease of movement.

The workshop in its "shell state" was difficult to picture. One room had to be everything: a new technology area, group area, private reading corner, resource base and one to one working area. We had to try and avoid disturbance by noisy printers or group work.

After trial and error the computers were not separated off but open to the whole working area so that movement between the two was facilitated and would aid students to plan a variety of activities.

This was necessary to ensure that CAL was of as much importance as using computers for vocational ends.

Physical considerations in setting up a centre

- Accessibility – the unit within the centre – the centre itself.
- A clear centre identity to encourage "off the street" interest and approach.
- Space for thorough and effective initial assessment and distance learning tutorials.
- Accessibility of student materials/ record cards/files/self teaching materials.
- Need to combine effective group work with 1:1 contacts.
- Use of and incorporation of new technology into overall centre use.

Targeting Publicity

As the centre has a city wide as well as local remit, we did not limit ourselves to local leafleting and use of posters. Time dictated that our publicity was low key. Also, having a small nucleus of existing students to be introduced to a new way of working, we did not wish to be inundated. In the event we were inundated anyway!

Local radio proved a useful source of publicity both providing a one-off detailed item as well as regular information items. Leafleting key primary schools was our other main route of publicity. Fortunately, since establishment, word of mouth has been our chief source of inquiry.

Use of New Technology

Purchasing computers and related hardware is a major responsibility and feeling confident about the final decision can be a headache. We decided to look at our "local conditions", the trends in the LEA and private enterprise. This meant our choice did not wholly reflect the national trend, however, we could feel confident in effectively accessing students to new technology. We bought a variety of machines to meet defined goals. With technician expertise, we decided that some BBC Masters would enable us to use a wide range of computer assisted learning activities, plus basic word processing for students' own work. We bought two sorts of Amstrads: PCWs to encourage word processing and office applications at a higher level and some IBM compatible machines for programming and more advanced operations. Finally, we bought an Archimedes, under the DES reduced terms initiative, with Business Plus packages including First Word Plus.

Behind these purchases was the knowledge that new technology was to be an indivisible part of our provision and that a wide range of student ability and interest would necessitate a huge range of resources. This would stretch from basic CAL and word processing on programs like "Writer" and "Folio" for the students to see their work in print, and to enhance literacy skills, to Locoscript, and Wordstar to introduce students to professional word processing packages as a precursor to vocational training. Our desire to offer accreditation such as RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology and RSA Core Text Processing and perhaps Word Processing Certificates meant such a spread was desirable. The implications of this variety of materials was the need for staff training, and their confidence in its use.

Purchase and Display of Resources

Our resources needed to cater for a huge range of ability, interest and need. The need to cater for allcomers was daunting in terms of resource provision. As a result, for instance, in the numeracy/maths area we have materials ranging from the very basic numeracy aids such as shapes, games, weights, coins, etc., to worksheets and past papers for low level certificate work such as RSA and City and Guilds to occasional GCSE support material. The requirement to access materials to students was paramount. New worksheets had to be accompanied by answer sheets to encourage independent learning. Some materials were devised as completely self-access but the processs of making existing materials so would take time.

"Distance Learning" materials were also required for those unable to attend the centre because of locality, work or family difficulties. To this end, we have purchased some 'open learning' packages and are devising our own.

A need we did not sufficiently anticipate was the materials required to support Employment Training and Vocational Educational Training Courses. This is an area of resources we are having to develop as we progress.

We also discovered the need to allow time for the "viewing" of newly devised materials to give all staff the chance to become familiar with them before they enter the system.

In order to display worksheets effectively we decided on an open box type of shelving in kit form, flexible to the demands of the room and capable of re-assembly should the need arise.

Its non-institutional appearance also appealed to us.

Books were displayed on moveable shelves and wall racks. The intention was to make all materials as attractive and accessible as possible.

Another factor which can be underestimated is the time it takes for materials of all types to be delivered and the time consuming process of ordering itself!

Factors needed for effective storage of materials

- High quality readily available copying facilities.
- A 'top copy' system, filed for easy access near the above.
- Clear structured plans and pointers for ease of access and retrieval.
- Cross-referencing as far as possible!
- Index systems that are clear, concise yet provide 'links' to further work.

Statistical Records and Monitoring

It is vital to keep updated, relevant statistics. Not only student records of progress and self assessment but "behind the scenes" accounts of numbers in specific target groups, etc. A database becomes invaluable! These records help in the constant monitoring of the progress of the centre, detecting any fall-out in student numbers and in keeping a track on the nature of the student body.

Student monitoring is student-centred as far as possible. Records are kept informally at every student contact and the student's participation in this is essential. Our intention is to review and adjust the individual's learning programme at regular intervals. Around the key areas of task, skills involved, materials, student comment and potential further work a diary and checklist are built up by each student with the help and support of staff.

Accreditation of Student Work

It has been essential to register the centre quickly for accreditation of students' work. We needed the widest possible range of options, which would allow for a student population which might want to move on to further study or work. As our opening year is far more extensive than the standard academic year it is vital to offer certificates that can be taken at various times as student need arises.

The wide range of accreditation offered includes basic competency modules to pre-vocational certificates in English, Maths, Word Processing and Computer Literacy. Certificates chosen have to allow for varying levels of attendance, different methods of delivery and time scales.

Flexible methods of assessment such as profiling are desirable to complement the philosophy of open learning and the irregular structure of a non-academic year but are available alongside exam options. For students, taking the option of accreditation has to be a positive experience open to all and unhindered by clumsy administrative procedures as far as possible.

Review of Initial Progress

By Christmas the pace was accelerating. Yes, we had sizeable numbers, sessions were full and it was too early to account for "true" drop-out due to the nature of provision.

However, what was the quality of provision?

Students were being counselled initially but we felt far less confident about the monitoring of individual student learning programmes once in "open learning". Was the system of on-going record keeping we had introduced working or were we, in some cases, paying lip service to it and expecting students to take on board too quickly, too much of their own assessment? Part-time staff could feel frustrated. Open learning for students could mean irregular but desired, patterns of attendance but for staff it could become difficult to follow ideas through and to see progression. We were beginning to let exhaustion over-ride job satisfaction. It was time for a long, critical evaluation.

Along with the desire to increase our own workshop skills and the need to review progress we used "in-house" training and staff meetings, for all the team, including support staff, to construct a framework for a structured, yet individually based system of student support. The "key tutor" system, by which each tutor would be especially responsible for reviewing the progress of a sub-group, would help us to monitor more thoroughly the progress and concerns of each of our 250 odd students and would continue to do so, hopefully, no matter how large the centre might become. We hoped this could be another method of turning ideology into practice.

Despite meeting our own deadline for opening, we were aware that constant modification was necessary and desirable.

What Next?

- To continue to work towards creating a team ethos, essential in a situation which demands shared teaching and continuity.
- To develop the need to see students as a moving population, with equal access, promoting independence of learning and career planning and to see the encouragement of these as part of good practice.
- It is important for us to review constantly and modify practice in the provision of resources and student evaluation.
- Not to be disheartened by delays and practical hurdles in the initial stages of each new venture.

REVIEWS

Authentic English for Reading 1

by Brian Abbs, Vivian Cook and Mary Underwood

Published by OUP

Price £3.80

ISBN 019 454110X

This book is intended for intermediate students of English. It contains ten units each of which has a central theme, fact, fiction or poetry, upon which various types of exercises are based. The central theme always has a full page to itself and is laid out in an interesting way. The exercises are set out facing the central theme for ease of reference. Answers are included at the back of the book.

As a text for adult learners of English, whose first language is not English, this book has a minimal value because it is obviously aimed at an age range of about 18-25 years and also towards students of English as a foreign language. It is however, possible to use a theme like 'family life' to stimulate creative writing in Adult Literacy classes. Therefore, I would recommend it as very occasionally suitable in the Adult Literacy context.

Meg Mayhew,
Northamptonshire Adult Education Service,
Northamptonshire Education Authority

Wordlife

by Richard Knott

Published by Nelson

Price: £3.50

ISBN 0 17 43 2177 5

Many of us know that poetry can have a tremendous impact on the reader. Yet for many adults their past experience of poetry has meant that they never want to read it again.

"Wordlife" is a powerful and inviting contemporary anthology which focuses on familiar themes relevant to growing up and adult life. Family memories, parenthood, travel, war and death are just some of the themes explored. Poems such as "The Cleaner" relate to the real world as perceived by many ABE students while "Dreaming Black Boy" could stimulate discussion about the multi-cultural context of contemporary Britain. There is something for every student in this anthology.

The book has an excellent introduction on how to handle poetry in the classroom and there is a section which makes suggestions for tutor directed activities. There are also suggestions for students who wish to study on their own.

The anthology is specifically designed to meet the criteria of the GCSE examination and the introduction and follow-up activities are addressed to the needs of English teachers in Secondary Schools. However, much of what is being said can also be taken on board by Adult Educators.

The language used in the poems is simple and most could be easily used with ABE or ESOL classes.

Richard Knott, in his foreword suggests that to fully enjoy poetry, poems should be invitational and be given back to the students. In my opinion this collection enables the ABE/ESOL tutor to do just that.

Robin Mark
ALBSU Co-ordinator
Learning Support Centre for Adults
Longlands College Campus
Middlesbrough
Cleveland LEA

Learning to Learn

by Pat Heaton and Gina Mitchell

Published by Better Books,
15A Chelsea Road, Bath

Price £10.50

ISBN 0904 700 496

This book sets out to combine the functions of a class course book and a self-study book for individual students from sixth-formers to adult returners. Starting with a comprehensive self-assessment profile (of eleven complicated pages) it covers the traditional skills of planning, reading, note-taking, essay writing and spelling, but also includes the often overlooked elements of verbal communication and learning by discussion.

With these contents and an apparently attractive layout, why then is this book not the answer to our needs?

Firstly there is far too much solid text, with few diagrams and unnecessarily complex language. (It measures age 20-21 on the SMOG readability formula – see Spring 1988 newsletter). Although presented in 'units' they are difficult to use separately. Most important it implies, particularly in its use of model answers to the exercises, that there is only one correct way of doing things.

I hoped to use the book on a course of the same title for a small group of students ready to leave basic education. But I found it totally irrelevant to their needs. Three of them took carefully selected sections away for home study. They enjoyed the challenge but would not recommend it without reservations.

The book attempts to do too much for too wide a range of students and does not do it well. With so many study skills books on the market, though still no single 'best buy', this is not a worthwhile addition.

Audrey Hills
Link Worker
Richmond Adult and Community College
Richmond Education Authority

Communications in the Workshop

Price £4.25

Communications in the Salon

Price £3.95

by Shelagh Snell

Published by Edward Arnold

Both books are targeted principally at students following CPVE, YTS and TVEI courses, though the vocational context in which they are set could make a useful resource for adults wishing to improve literacy/communication skills.

The level set is relatively advanced including report writing, memoranda, etc., though the source material

included, forms, text, extracts from hairdressing/engineering manuals and so on could be adapted to suit individual needs.

Particularly useful assignments on such topics as setting up a mobile hairdressing business and covering oral as well as written skills are to be found in the 'Salon' book. However, the 'Workshop' version (referring to engineering and construction workshops), is rather thin, with very few assignments of direct relevance, the author having attempted to encompass far too wide a range of skills within one volume.

Much of the material included on general areas i.e. applying for jobs, using the telephone, is common to both books and would already be available to anyone teaching communications.

Far too many of the tasks set involve straight letter writing work which students can find rather tedious and which does not reflect the variety of skills required of communications syllabuses.

Given the dearth of published work integrating communications and vocational areas it is excellent to see relevant material in such an accessible format, though it is unfortunate that more vocationally oriented, varied assignments are not included.

Alicia Katsoulacos
Thameside College of Technology
Thameside Education Authority

Lifewise

by Alan Rumney and Pam Denton

Published by Edward Arnold

ISBN 0-7131-7750-0

'Lifewise' contains a collection of assignments for key areas of social and life skills, dealing with budgeting, welfare state, social problems, relationships, applying for jobs, to name just a few sections. There are twelve topics in all, each one divided into sub-sections. The book ends with a list of 'useful' addresses of support groups, advice centres and counselling organisations.

The preface states that the exercises are aimed at 14-18 year olds. Some exercises need very little supervision, some are designed for group participation, but all can be modified to fit a particular need in what is sometimes a remote area of the curriculum.

The group I involved in reviewing the book are actually adults on a vocational training scheme. All found it enjoyable to work with, felt that the instructions were clearly given and that a great deal of thought and sometimes research was needed before answering the questions. The group assignments allowed comparison of opinions, giving each member the opportunity to speak for himself.

Further comments made by the 'review' group were that the lay-out, print and graphics were good, very clear and concise. I thought that the coding at the beginning of each topic was particularly useful indicating e.g.:

I – individual assignment
G – group work
I/G – either individual or group

Although the book is aimed at youth, the assignments vary to cover each age of society. The 'Agony Aunt' section contains letters from teenagers, a 'worried lady', Bill, who has recently retired and Colin, a teacher in a large comprehensive. The exercise involves the user putting herself/himself in the place of the editor of a problem page.

In all, the book will be a useful addition to any life-skills collection. We will certainly add it to ours.

Ann Parry-Jones,
Co-Ordinator,
Job Review Course,
The Friary Community Education Centre, Cardiff
South Glamorgan Education Authority

A News Worksheet

by Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown and Brown, Keeper's Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ

Published three times a year

Price: Single copies £1.50, 3 Issues £4.50

The 'News Worksheet' is a new concept in Adult Literacy resource material, though found in other areas of educational provision. A questionnaire for students and tutors accompanying the first edition resulted in changes in the format and presentation of the second, so the consultative process is seen to work.

I would thoroughly recommend these sets of worksheets for use as a back-up resource. The material is multi-level, with an element of numeracy; the subjects are topical enough to stimulate interesting – and sometimes heated – class discussion. News items dealt with so far include nurses' pay, the availability of shotguns, Zola Budd and Eastenders. Articles are taken from various newspapers and are followed by questions and ideas to encourage writing. Other activities based on the worksheet involve cloze exercises, anagrams, proof-reading, spot the error and word games. Just when you have exhausted one pack, a new one with fresh ideas and up-to-date references arrives.

The worksheets, attractively displayed and easily understood, are an excellent resource for hard-pressed tutors. Not every item will please or suit a particular group but there is much to select from or adapt and at £1.50 an issue, they are reasonably priced and good value for money.

Ros Lacey
Head of Basic Skills Unit
Hillingdon Education Authority

Dealing with Dyslexia

by Pat Heaton and Patrick Winterson

Published by Better Books

Price £6.95

ISBN 0904 700 488

The book is divided into three parts: the first, by Patrick Winterson, 'About Dyslexia' is a discussion of the nature of dyslexia within a linguistic framework. He argues that dyslexia is basically an 'underlying disorder of language function' and goes on to discuss language processing including the arbitrariness of linguistic symbols, the differences between written and spoken language, and the ways in which language dysfunction can be seen to be the origin of all dyslexic 'symptoms'. He also argues that a

knowledge of 'the complexities of written language and the reading process' can help a teacher to better understand the dyslexic's difficulties as well as provide a basis for teaching.

In Book Two, Pat Heaton provides a checklist for identifying dyslexia with useful diagrams to indicate the variety of language confusions the dyslexic may experience, as well as a typical 'case study' and strategies for teaching dyslexics. Her teaching programme is based on a structured phonic approach which I find inappropriate for use with adults, and I would not recommend it to tutors of adult dyslexics.

In Book Three, Patrick Winterson discusses in greater detail the English Writing System: this includes a linguistic analysis of the reading process and the English spelling system. He makes the useful point of the need to make the reading process *explicit* when teaching. However, he again emphasises the 'primacy' of phonics in teaching dyslexics and I would take issue with him on this point.

Finally, the theoretical parts of this book would be useful for tutors who want a deeper understanding of linguistics as a framework for understanding reading and spelling difficulties, but once again the teaching approaches seem dubious for use with adults.

Cynthia Klein
Acting Co-ordinator
ILEA Learning Difficulties Support Service
Inner London Education Authority

Cooking for Fundraising

Students' Book Price 50p
Tutor's Book Price 50p

Make your own Easter Egg

Price 50p

Metric Measures

Price 75p

Many Lands Many Lives

Price 75p

Published by Ben Books, Coventry Technical College, Butts, Coventry CV1 3GD

The Ben Unit has produced a series of workbooks which present an integrated approach to Basic Skills.

A 'Cooking For Fundraising' project has resulted in the publication of a tutor's book, and a students' book containing recipes. These are available in A4 size with type-written text.

The tutor's book outlines the aim of the project and provides information about planning and discussion with students as well as listing literacy/numeracy skills which were developed. The students' book covers recipes ranging from Victoria Sandwich Cake to Samosas, and includes practical tasks involving calculation and estimation. Instructions are presented in printed and diagrammatic form.

While the content of these booklets is useful, the presentation is fairly basic. The format – stapled A4 sheets – gives a 'home-made' appearance and is not really durable enough for frequent use.

Also from the Ben Unit: A workbook on 'Metric Measures', A4 handwritten worksheets, 'Make Your Own Easter Eggs", clear simple text and illustrations, and 'Many Lands Many Lives', writing by students from various cultural backgrounds. I found this last booklet enjoyable and interesting and liked the students' illustrations. The language used is simple but effective, and should be accessible to ESL and Basic Skills students who have moved on from beginner level.

Bernadette Hayes
Part-time ABE Tutor/Organiser
College of Adult Education
Bury Education Authority

Tales from Tyneside

Worth Our Salt
by 8 Local Authors

50 pages, 14 line drawings

Price £1.00 (add 25p for p&p)

ISBN 0 9613511 1 7

Spuggy's Flight
by 9 Local Authors

48 pages, 14 line drawings

Price £1.00 (add 25p for p&p)

ISBN 0 9613511 0 9

Published by Heaton and Byker Writers Group, Heaton Publications, Heaton Education Centre, Trewhitt Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE6 5DY
Tel: 091-265 5725

These two books were written by adult literacy students attending classes in Tyneside. Each book is an anthology of short stories, mainly humorous.

The books are aimed at 'competent readers' and it is hoped that they will 'encourage others to write – and edit – for themselves.'

I enjoyed the writing very much – several pieces are extremely funny and the books would certainly demonstrate to anybody that literacy students can write well. Many of the stories are based on the writers' childhood experiences in and around Tyneside.

Unfortunately the presentation doesn't match the standard of the writing. The text is rather cramped and not easy to read. The black and white line drawings are crude and too small: they seem to have been added as an afterthought.

This is a pity because the rough feel of the book might put off potential readers. A larger typeface and more attention to the general layout and design of the books would give them a much wider appeal and would certainly make them more accessible to adult literacy students.

To finish on a more positive note, I was pleased to see that the production of the books was supported by local concerns such as Northern Arts and IBM (Newcastle). If there are to be further titles in this series, perhaps finance could be secured to pay for improved illustration and design.

Peter Beynon
Project Leader
NEWMAT: An ALBSU Special Development Project
Nottinghamshire Education Authority

Gatehouse Project Publications

The Beaumont Writers' Group
by The Writers' Group at Beaumont Projects Work Unit, Blackley, Manchester
Price 40p

Chipping in at Prestwich
by The Creative Writing Groups at Prestwich Hospital
Price 75p

From Pen to Paper
by Pen to Paper Writers' Workshop
Price £1.25

The Love I Lost
by Doreen McLaren
Price 75p

Published by Gatehouse Project, St. Luke's, Sawley Road, Miles Platting, Manchester M10 8DB

The Beaumont Writers' Group:
The contributors to this magazine suffer from cerebral palsy, and give a refreshlingly spontaneous insight into their lives and feelings. This writing is a sharp reminder of the problems faced by the disabled, but presents a positive picture of the writers.

Chipping in at Prestwich:
A collection of three skillful and amusing short plays for reading aloud. The plots centre on a wedding, a courtroom drama and the survivors of a plane crash on a desert island. A useful introduction charts the writers' approach to working collectively, and gives informed encouragement to other would-be writers.

From Pen to Paper:
This collection of prose and verse is written by older students, and it is interesting to view the world through their eyes. The strong identity of Manchester and its people past and present pervades the book, and the social history content could usefully be explored. The language, however, is often complex and literary.

The Love I Lost:
Told in 'flashback', this story makes touching and quite compulsive reading. It traces the development of the relationship between a boy 'married to his wheelchair' and the girl who loves and wants to marry him. The style is natural and unstilted.

Reasonably priced, these books would make a useful addition to any ABE book collection, although they are not suitable for the struggling reader to cope with alone. Selected pieces could be used as a basis for group discussion and the development of the personal and social issues they raise. These publications should prove a useful stimulus for student writing, and be particularly suitable for use with writers' groups.

Pat Andersson
Buckinghamshire Education Authority

GAIM – Graded Assessment in Mathematics

by GAIM Team
Composed of Teachers and Researchers based at King's College, London, in conjunction with University of London School Examinations Board, The London & East Anglian Group for GCSE, The Nuffield Foundation and 10 LEA's.

Published by Macmillan Education
Price £19.95
ISBN 0 333 46066 9

This pack consists of:

- a teacher's handbook with an introduction giving full details of the scheme
- photocopy masters of student material for 40 activities
- a topic criteria book covering levels 1 - 8
- record sheets

The teacher's handbook has over 300 pages. For each activity sheet the handbook lists topic criteria, level, resources necessary, outline of activity, what the teacher's role should be, possible outcomes, suggested extensions and how to assess results. This is all very clearly set out.

The photocopy masters of student material are divided into two sections. They are investigations which are open-ended mathematical exploration and practical problems. I found the latter most useful with my Numeracy students. There are activities like booking guests into appropriate rooms in a hotel and replacing belongings with insurance money after a holiday hotel fire. The practical problem of designing a kitchen has cut-out sheets of appliances drawn to scale to put on a floor plan of the kitchen and price lists of both new and second hand appliances. My students found these thoroughly enjoyable although they said they really made them think.

In my situation I did not find the rest of the pack very useful but feel sure that tutors working single-handed with a large group of average and below average students would find the teacher's handbook and the photocopy masters useful. I would like to see more activities based on practical problems done in this way.

The pack as a whole is very well thought out and easy to use.

Eileen Parker
Numeracy Organiser
Reading Adult College
Berkshire Education Authority

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

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Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

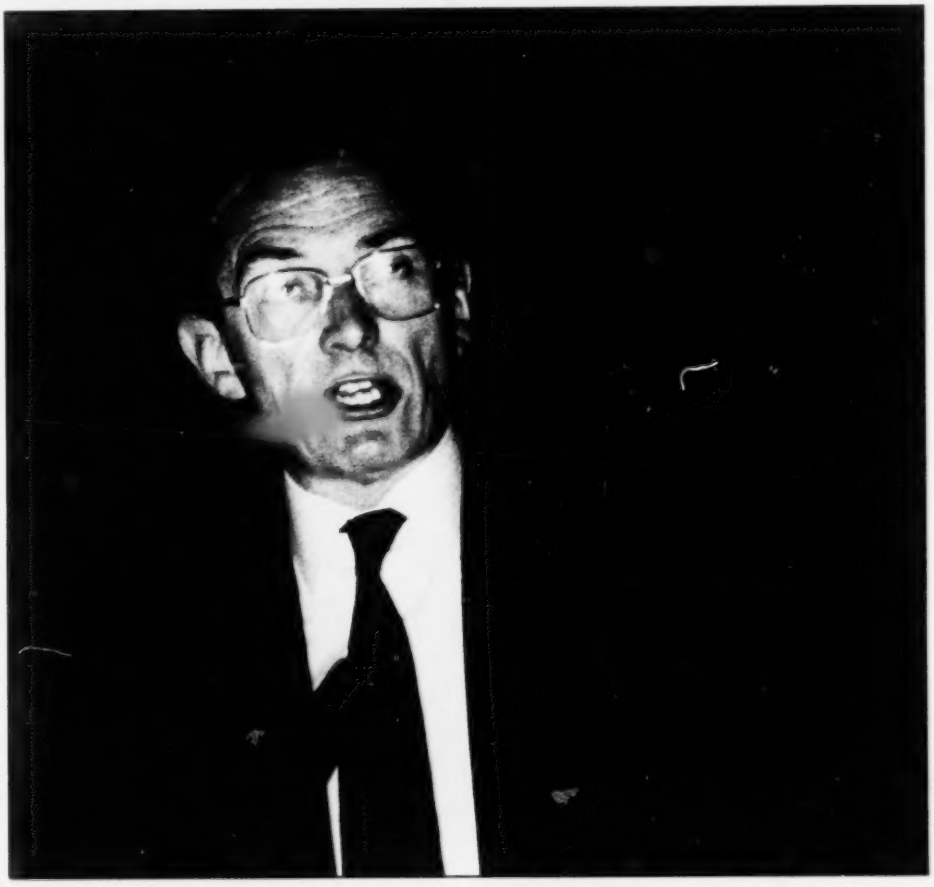

Photo: Peter Ward

"TEC's will be required to improve and develop services for disadvantaged groups." Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Employment, speaking at ALBSU's Annual Conference (see p2.)

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING: CO-OPERATION OR COMPETITION?

The Training Agency's programme for unemployed adults, Employment Training, (commonly known at ET) has had a major effect on the provision of basic skills tuition for adults since its inception in September 1988. At the very least it tends to polarise opinion about whether to co-operate to improve the quality of ET or whether to steer clear of it altogether.

ALBSU believes that co-operation is essential between all providers of basic skills tuition if duplication is to be avoided and high quality learning opportunities are to be made available whatever the context. The Unit has co-operated with the Training Agency to try to ensure that ET basic skills training is as effective as possible and the results of this co-operation have been reported in earlier Newsletters.

Co-operation does not mean, however, that we are uncritical of Employment Training or of the Training Agency; ALBSU jealously guards its independence and its right to criticise poor quality provision wherever it exists. We are the central unit of high quality learning opportunities for any adult who wants to improve her or his basic skills, rather than the central unit of any particular sector or interest.

TEETHING PROBLEMS

Employment Training has undoubtedly had some 'teething problems' since it was established. It was set up rather too hurriedly with optimistic targets and an absence of careful planning in too many places. Moreover, some of the Training Managers involved had little, if any, experience of providing literacy and numeracy tuition and, as most people realise, learning how to teach these essential basic skills to adults who had inadequately grasped them at school is not a simple process. Teaching literacy and numeracy, particularly in a vocational context, cannot be equated to teaching job seeking skills or interview technique; it is a sensitive, skilled task which needs considerable training and support.

These 'teething problems' were made worse by the Training Agency's apparent desire not to involve colleges or LEAs as Training Managers to any significant extent. Practitioners who had considerable experience of literacy and numeracy work, some of whom had worked on previous MSC (as the Training Agency was) programmes such as Preparatory Courses, or the Job Training Scheme, were excluded from involvement in this new and ambitious programme. It's fair to say, however, that in recent months rather more experienced practitioners have become involved in ET as Training Managers have begun to sub-contract basic skills work to LEAs and colleges of further education.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

It is all too easy to take a 'holier than thou' attitude to Employment Training; to see bad practice as exclusively in ET and good practice as exclusively in LEAs and colleges. Yet whilst it is understandable that a new programme such as ET has a difficult initial period, it is less defensible that some LEAs and colleges still have very poor quality services almost a decade and a half after the need for basic skills provision was recognised nationally. This is no criticism of practitioners in these areas (although it would be foolish to pretend that there are no bad practitioners) particularly as usually what service does exist is provided through the exploitation of the good will of practitioners. LEAs and colleges where basic skills organisers are employed to be responsible for all of the provision on a few hours a week usually for little more than half of the year have little

> *TECs will be required to develop and improve services for disadvantaged groups . . . This will include provision of basic skills training, which I appreciate is needed to help substantial numbers of unemployed and employed people.*
>
> *Norman Fowler*

room to criticise and much room for improvement.

It would, of course, be nice to believe that LEA and college basic education schemes could have provided basic skills training for ET in every part of the country; it would, however, be less than true. There are still too many areas of England and Wales where the Training Agency would look in vain for expertise about teaching and learning in basic skills or about materials and staff training. Moreover, few practitioners have had much experience of teaching in a vocational context or of producing materials linked to vocational training – the type of material many unemployed adults want.

CO-OPERATION

Co-operation is also not a strong point in some LEAs and often there is little contact between different sectors of the same service (adult and further education, for instance) or between different parts of the local authority. It is still all to easy to see intense competition for the same potential basic skills students between adult centres and colleges of further education leading to duplication of provision, staff training, materials and a good deal of wasted effort. Most adults in the community, of course, rarely realise which sector they are involved in or what the difference is between an adult education centre and a college of further education.

This intense rivalry is not just typical of British post school education but appears to be prevalent throughout the industrialised world (let's hope that countries with more recently developed systems have better sense). The stress the new Education Reform act puts on planning may improve the situation although there is also much in the Act which may encourage even more competition for scarce resources and, in the case of young adults, scarce students.

We need co-operation between all providers if we are to ensure that high quality basic skills provision is widely available. Co-operation is not easy particularly as it involves a good deal of give and take but basic skills work with often vulnerable disillusioned adults and young people is surely one area where the 'market place' should not be allowed to operate unrestrained particularly as it will usually operate to the detriment of the very people who have already had a fairly raw deal from the education and training system.

OPEN ACCESS

The different role of different providers is also important to remember in developing co-operation. Whilst Employment Training has had a major impact on the map of basic skills provision, its role is limited to vocationally related training for adults who are unemployed. LEAs and colleges continue to provide the only 'open access' service where the only qualification to enter is to want to learn. It is important that specialist provision is developed as part of education and training for specific groups of people, including offenders and ex-offenders, the mentally ill, those in sheltered accommodation as well as in the context of a particular time in an individual's life such as unemployment or returning to learning. The core service, however, is that which does not depend on any of these factors but is genuinely open to anyone in a local community.

TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE COUNCILS

The Secretary of State for Employment, Norman Fowler's speech at ALBSU's National Conference in June was encouraging about the need for increased co-operation. The development of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) over the next few years is likely to be crucial in increasing co-operation. TECs will be responsible for both ET and YTS in an area and although two thirds of the TEC Board will come from senior business leaders the other third will include people from local education and training providers, voluntary bodies and trade unions. Norman Fowler said that he expected there to be: *"strong links between TECs and adult education and training interests"*.

He also said that TECs will:

"be required to develop and improve services for disadvantaged groups whatever their needs. This will include provision of basic skills training, which I appreciate is needed to help substantial numbers of unemployed and employed people".

It is encouraging that the Secretary of State for Employment recognises the need for basic skills training as part of Employment Training and the Youth Training Scheme and that this training has been included as a substantial element of both Programmes. ALBSU argued long and hard that this should be the case at a time when the MSC seemed to be progressively decreasing this essential provision and merely referring unemployed people to part-time and often inappropriate LEA and college provision.

COULD DO BETTER . . .

It is to the Training Agency's credit that they have accepted the need for such provision for many people. All is far from perfect and whilst examples of good practice exist in ET too many examples of bad practice mar the picture. The Unit is far from convinced about the role of Training Agents in assessing basic skills needs amongst potential ET trainees, feels that there is a good deal of work needed on determining appropriate 'action plans' for trainees and recognises the need to provide better support and monitoring of the basic skills training made by Training Managers.

A QUALITY SERVICE

We believe that progress can only be achieved through co-operation and the sharing of practice, particularly as not to co-operate only punishes the trainees and staff many of whom are just as critical of the standard of basic skills training as ALBSU is. Whilst we will continue to criticise poor quality basic skills provision in ET and YTS and elsewhere, we will continue to co-operate with all providers to ensure that the basic skills service we all want to see in every area of England and Wales becomes a reality.

LITERACY FOR THE WORKPLACE

Christine Cox, Co-ordinator of the Basic Skills Unit at the Youth Education Service in Bristol, suggests ways of pinpointing the literacy skills needed in different jobs. She outlines methods designed to identify what trainees find difficult, to give them effective support and to develop work related materials.

Why start in the workplace?

As ABE practitioners we want to ensure that students are motivated to improve their basic skills and that they are enabled to recognise their strengths as well as their weaknesses.

An approach which starts by identifying the literacy and numeracy skills needed by someone to do a particular job is a positive way of beginning to negotiate a learning programme with a student. It enables the tutor to produce relevant learning materials and can also help employers/supervisors to see ways of supporting people with literacy/numeracy needs 'on the job'.

In this article I am going to outline some work I did with one particular Youth Training Scheme:

- Identifying literacy and numeracy in the workplace
- Identifving areas of particular difficulty to trainees
- Planning appropriate basic skills support
- Developing materials.

Avon Motor Project

Avon Motor Project is a Youth Training Scheme run by the Youth and Community Help Trust. Its aim is to equip young people who have been, or who are likely to be in trouble with the law, with the opportunity of gaining professionally recognised qualifications and personal social skills which will significantly improve their chances of obtaining full-time employment. The practical training is garage based. Each trainee has the opportunity of obtaining a City and Guilds 381 Part 1 Certificate in their first year and half of Part 2 in their second year.

The project staff were concerned about the drop out rate among trainees with poor literacy and numeracy skills and approached me for help.

I decided to start by visiting the project to see what the trainees actually had to do, and what skills they needed. In order to focus on these skills, I developed a simple checklist, inspired by the one in the

JOB SKILLS CHECKLIST
***Numbers Refer to Additional Notes**

MOTOR PROJECT

Does practical work involve . . .

Reading notices ☐ **1**
Reading instructions ☐ **2**
Reading people's handwriting ☐
Using a telephone directory/ Yellow pages ☐
Filing ☐
Answering the phone ☐ **3**
Leaving telephone messages ☐
Filling in forms/record sheets/ job cards ☐
Writing notes ☐
Writing reports ☐
Writing letters ☐
Using the phone ☐
Extracting information from manuals ☐ **4**

Does theory work involve the use of . . .

Textbooks ☐ **10**
Manuals ☐ **11**
Handouts ☐ **12**
Worksheets ☐ **13**
Test papers ☐ **14**
Reading instruction .e.g on commercial packages of material ☐
Copy from blackboard ☐ **15**
Understand diagrams ☐ **16**
Write reports ☐ **17**

Counting ☐
Measuring ☐ **5**
Estimating ☐ **6**
Weighing ☐ **7**
Taking money from people ☐
Giving change ☐
Using a till ☐
Working out how much things will cost ☐
Using the 24 hour clock ☐
Doing simple calculations (+ − × ÷) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Understanding percentages ☐
Understanding fractions ☐
Using a calculator ☐
Reading a map, chart or plan ☐
Calculation of time ☐ **8**
Calculation of proportion ☐ **9**

Do trainees have to . . .

Make notes ☐ **18**
Write essays ☐
Answer questions in writing ☐ **19**
Answer multiple choice questions ☐ **20**

jobskills

ALBSU booklet, 'Teaching Literacy and Numeracy to Craft Students'. It is not perfect but at least it is easy to use and understandable to staff and trainees.

In consultation with staff and trainees, and from my own observations, I completed the checklists and made the additional notes. Staff and trainees agreed that the main problems were with numbers 11 - 20.

It was clear that the relationship between trainees and supervisors on the Motor Project was a good one: supervisors treating trainees as adults and expecting them to behave in an adult way; trainees in turn respecting supervisors and seeing them as possessing skills and knowledge worth acquiring.

I concluded that staff were thus key figures in helping trainees to improve their Basic Skills, hand in hand with acquiring the skills of motor mechanics.

Thursday, the day I visited AMP, was divided into two, with City and Guilds theory work in the morning and practical work in the afternoon.

I sat in the classroom with the trainees as they copied notes from a chalkboard. The supervisor then gave oral explanations and used diagrams where appropriate.

Those trainees with poor literacy skills had an immediate problem. Copying from the board may seem like a simple task but in fact trainees are being asked to do all this at once:

1. Copy the words (sometimes letter by letter in the case of one trainee).
2. Recognise vocabulary which they may not have seen in writing before.
3. Visualise things presented in a written description.
4. Connect new information with what they already know.

The notes were from a fairly technical text book. The supervisor picked out parts he felt trainees needed at this stage of the course and left the rest, but sentence structure and difficult vocabulary remained.

I was able to suggest to the supervisor that it would help all the trainees if notes were presented in a more accessible form. We spent some time together, working on the notes, until he felt confident to simplify them himself, using the guidelines on page 6.

I also suggested a move towards greater variety in teaching styles and learning methods, with an emphasis on active participation.

The scheme I outlined was:

- Oral and visual presentation of new information (perhaps in the workshop).
- Brainstorm of what trainees remember – keywords written on the board
- Notes given out and read by supervisor while students track
- Exercises to ensure comprehension in pairs or sub-groups
- Recap

The type of exercises I suggested to ensure that trainees have understood what they read are those commonly referred to as DARTS (Directed Activities Related to Text). These help students to develop reading and comprehension skills as they learn. The second part of this article contains more details of these exercises.

MOTOR PROJECT – JOB SKILLS ANALYSIS

An analysis of the skills required by trainees on Avon Motor Project shows that, although the project centres around the practical work, there is a large amount of literacy/numeracy involved, particularly on the theory side as trainees prepare for City and Guilds exams.

1. Reading notices
Trainees have to read notices around the work place – warning notices, etc.

2. Reading instructions
Instructions are sometimes given in written form but supervisors can help if trainees have difficulties with these.

3. Using the phone
Trainees have to use the phone to order equipment or stores. They find it hard to rehearse mentally what they are going to say before they make their calls.

4. Extracting information from manuals
Trainees have to refer to manuals and find relevant information.

5. Measuring
Using – *micrometer* – measuring in 1/1000.
– *feeler gauges* – measuring spark plug gaps
– *vernier scale* – for measuring inside and outside, bore size
– *steel rule* – cutting plate for welding

Trainees also have to select size of drill – smaller/larger.
Understand thickness of nuts, bolts, pins, etc
Trainees need to understand the relevant decimals/fractions.

6. Estimating
Trainees have to estimate drill sizes/lengths. Also weights of vehicles for safety and the length of time a job will take.

7. Weighing
Ramps.

8. Calculation of time
Work maintenance sheets, labour rates.

9. Calculation of proportion
Working out ratios – e.g. mixing fuel

10. Text books
For theory sessions

11. Manuals
For theory sessions and see 4. above.

12. Handouts
For theory sessions

13. Worksheets
For theory sessions

14. Test papers
City and Guilds practice papers

15. Copy from blackboard/O.H.P.
Trainees copy theory notes from blackboard or overhead projector.

16. Understanding diagrams
Pictures and diagrams are provided for trainees to label, colour code.

17. Write reports
Trainees are asked to write reports following camps and visits.

18. Make notes
Trainees are asked to write notes after watching films.

19. Answer questions in writing
For exams

20. Answer Multi-choice Questions.
For exams

Photo: Dave Glossop

Avon Motor Project

PREPARING A SIMPLIFIED TEXT TO USE WITH A GROUP OF TRAINEES

1. Read and re-read the text yourself.
2. List the items you wish to include.
3. Write a rough draft for the simplification, working from this contents list.
   When writing this draft consider these guidelines:
   (i) Consider re-arranging the order of ideas if this could make it easier to follow.
   (ii) Work to the *gist* of a section. Don't go through the text sentence by sentence.
   (iii) Try to write in sensible, everyday English, using common phrases. Avoid being childish.
   (iv) Retain essential words or phrases. There is no alternative to accelerator or collet. In fact trainees may read these technical/specialist words more easily than the smaller words.
   (v) Make sure your sentences vary in length and structure. Sentences of the same length and structure make boring reading.
4. Re-read your rough draft to get the feel of how it reads and check for points i – iv above.
5. Make a final version of the simplification.
   Presentation
   (i) Make presentation clear, well spaced and attractive.
   (ii) Type if possible, or write in clear lower and upper case.
   (iii) Make line breaks in appropriate places, i.e. break material into short lines of manageable phrases, not in the middle of meaningful phrases.
   (iv) Use pictures, diagrams, charts, and labels as much as possible. This cuts down on the amount of written material needed and increases clarity.
   (v) Consider a seqence of pictures and captions.
   (vi) Some things are best presented in tabular form/flow diagram/annotated diagram.
6. Now ask yourself the following questions:
   (i) Does it get the information over?
   (ii) Is the information as clear as possible?
   (iii) Does the piece read smoothly and naturally?
   (iv) Is it of a suitable level for the reading abilities of particular students?
7. Use the text with the trainees and note whether:
   (i) They can read it smoothly – what phrases, words etc. cause trouble?
   (ii) They get the information – what would have helped them get it more easily?

You can learn more from Stage 7 than from any other stage.

To recap, the process I went through at Avon Motor Project was:

1. Visit workplace
2. Complete checklist – with help from supervisors and trainees
3. Identify areas of difficulty
4. Identify appropiate method of support As this includes production of materials:
   (a) Identify content – what trainees need to be able to do or read.
   (b) Choose medium (what sort of exercise).
   (c) Design materials.
   (d) Test run with trainees.
   (e) Adapt and refine.

Here are some ideas for the sort of work related materials you can produce.

Work related materials

Sight Words

Flash cards/photographs of workplace signs/ Bingo/snap games – matching pictures with names – matching signs with words

Reading Support

Read along tapes – tutor records text onto tape for students to listen to while tracking text. Make use of personal stereos.

Comprehension

Sequencing – A series of instructions (for instance) given in random order for student to arrange in logical sequence.

Cloze – A text with words omitted at regular intervals. Student fills in suitable words to reconstruct the text. (See "Assessing Reading, by Judy Vaughan, published by ALBSU, for the many uses of cloze).

Labelling – A diagram or picture is given to the student to label. Where appropriate, the words to be used may be given separately.

Matching – This can take various forms. A list of tools may be given, together with a list of uses. The student is asked to match the tool with its use.

Underlining or Highlighting – Students are asked to underline the parts of a text which convey particular information, e.g. 'Underline in red the part that tells you the function of the collet.'

Tabulating Information – Students are asked to read a text and present the information in the form of a table.

Sorting – Students are asked to sort sentences into various classifications. For instance True or False.

Spelling

Crosswords

Sentence completion to practise relevant vocabulary.

Simulation Exercises

These can be used to practise skills which have posed problems at work. The possibilities are endless. Here are a couple of examples:

Using a tape recorder to practise taking telephone messages

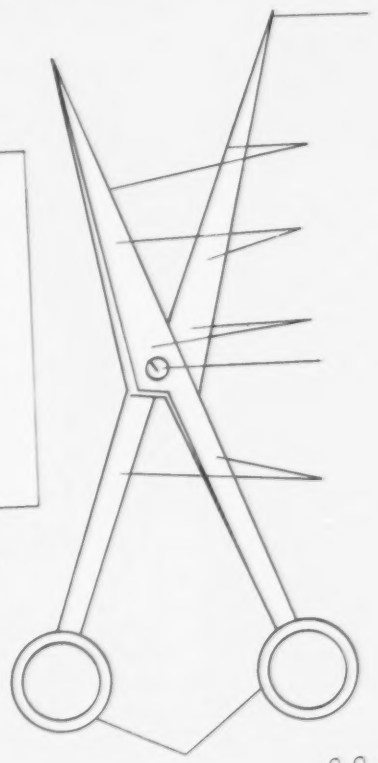
Working in pairs to practise telephone skills

Working in pairs to practise giving and receiving oral instructions.

A Pair of Scissors

Use these words to label the diagram

- *Points*
- *Shanks*
- *Pivot*
- *Handles*
- *Edges*
- *Heel*
- *Blades*



jobskills

Body Shapes – Match the name to the diagram

van

estate

pick-up

coupe

convertible

Matching

The do's and don'ts of Health and Hygiene

Write *do* or *don't* in front of these. Then write out two lists.

cover food
use clean cloth or paper for covering food
handle food more than necessary
mix dirty and clean crockery or utensils
wash hands between working with different sorts of food
keep food less than 460mm (18ins) from the floor
wash hands immediately after touching uncooked food
keep lids on bins containing rubbish
keep food either piping hot of very cold
cough or sneeze near food
learn the food hygiene regulations
clean food as you go along
allow work surface to get dirty or leave waste food on them
clean as you go along
use the proper cleaning liquids for each job

Sorting

Work at Avon Motor Project was undertaken with assistance from Avon Accredited Training Centre, ALBSU, (through an LDP with Avon LEA), YES and the Motor Project.

Information

ALBSU is pleased to announce the appointment of Peter Davis, Chief Executive of Reed International plc, as the Chairman of the Unit's Management Committee in succession to Kenneth Brooksbank.

We are particularly pleased that an eminent industrialist, from a Company with a keen interest in adult literacy and basic skills, has accepted the invitation of the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, to become the Chairman of ALBSU's Management Committee.

Alan Wells, Director ALBSU and John Barnes, Director General, City and Guilds, signing the agreement for the Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills.

VIEWPOINTS No. 9

Lessons from Abroad – Developing Countries

Articles on developing practice in adult literacy and basic skills in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Price £1.25

Postage: single copies 22p; 5 copies 65p; 10 copies £1.70.

VIEWPOINTS No. 10

Basic Skills and the Education Reform Act

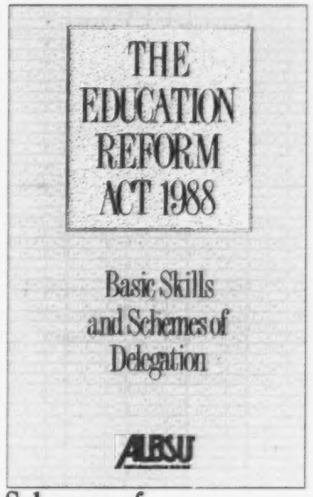
This issue of viewpoints considers some of the possible effects of the Education Reform Act on basic skills work.

Articles included consider:

- voluntary/statutory links
- pointers on planning under the Education Reform Act
- officer and practitioner perspectives

Price £1.25

Postage: single copies 22p; 5 copies 65p; 10 copies £1.70.



Schemes of Delegation

You may think that Schemes of Delegation sound like a very boring subject and you would probably be right. However, boring as it may be, they are particularly important for the future funding of basic skills and ESOL provision and it is essential that everyone knows what Schemes of Delegation are and can influence them.

Every Local Education Authority (LEA) is required by the 1988 Education Reform Act to draw up a Scheme of Delegation for further education colleges in their area for the approval of the Secretary of State. These Schemes will set out how basic education and ESOL will be planned and funded as part of the work of colleges.

ALBSU has prepared an analysis of about 50 per cent of the draft Schemes of Delegation called 'Basic Skills and Schemes of Delegation' copies of which are available free of charge from the Unit.

Local Development Projects

From April 1990 ALBSU will be able to sponsor a new cycle of Local Development Projects. There are four areas of development for sponsorship:

- Basic Skills Provision for Parents
- Progression Routes for Basic Skills Students to Further Education and Training.
- Basic Skills Support for Students in Colleges of Further Education.
- Workplace Basic Skills provision.

Guidelines on the process of preparing a submission for a Local Development Project are available, free, from the Unit. Please send a large SAE envelope.

Dear Editor,

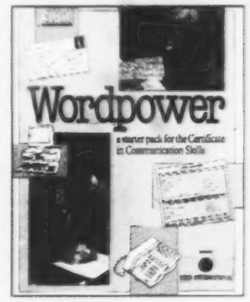
To ABE or Not To ABE?

Do other schemes have an identity complex, I wonder? The generic name 'Adult Basic Education' which, I assume, has grown up organically as an offshoot of 'Adult Education' suffers from the distinguishing feature 'Basic' as this word is neither specific nor useful: it fails to tell us basic *what* but *whatever* it is has a diminishing status! The species 'literacy' ('numeracy') may indeed tell us *what* but reinforces any sense of inadequacy with its 'flip-side' label of 'illiterate' ('innumerate'). The result is that we, as an organisation, by our very name, display a low self-image. When we describe our classes, we still cling to what is known and safe, and the title 'Improve Your English/Maths', has a worthy Victorian ring to it which (to me) seems out of date. Why do we keep it then? Well, to be honest, when asked, nine out of ten of our students said they preferred it! But, unlike a well-known brand of cat food, I suggest it isn't simply a matter of taste. I know we should all be 'grown up' about it and be positive in our attitude by embracing the words 'Basic' and 'Literacy' but perhaps this is easier for some than for others, for the fact is that many students (and potential students) *are* still sensitive about being 'labelled' and seek anonymity in the crowd. This makes packaging and marketing the product a tricky business, unlike for, say, 'Basic Cookery' as opposed to 'Cordon Bleu'.

What does ALBSU think about its *own* name? How can we improve (there's that earnest word again) our image whilst at the same time reflecting an accurate picture of what we do? Or is everyone else happy with what they've got and if so why?

Reine Plumpton
ABE Organiser – North Warwickshire

Note: ALBSU's name was determined by the Department of Education and Science.



Wordpower

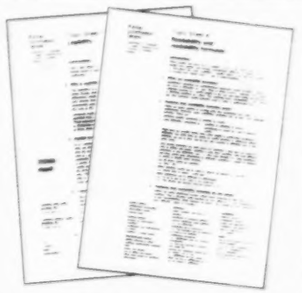
A starter pack for the new Certificate in Communication Skills.

- The pack contains all the material produced to accompany the new BBC TV instructional series, repackaged for open learning study.
- Plus guidelines for students wishing to follow the new certificate.
- Notes for tutors
- The pack comes in its own attractive binder designed for presentation of student work for assessment purposes.

Price £3.99

Orders in advance from ALBSU.

Produced as part of the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative by ALBSU and BBC Education with sponsorship by Reed International.



Form design

The Forms Information Centre, at the University of Reading, provides information about writing, designing, controlling, producing and evaluating forms plus related documents. It publishes guidance, for example on Legibility and Readability, and offers a range of Services.

For more information contact:

Jen Scott, F.I.C. University of Reading, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, 2 Earley Gate, Whiteknights, PO Box 239, Reading RG6 2AU.

Older People and Literacy

Do you have any, or many, older people in your basic education schemes? Do you feel that your programmes are meeting the needs of older people? Is current provision attracting the older people who need help? . . . and if not, why not?

There seems to be no data on the extent of functional illiteracy among older people in the UK. One can only guess that it is a serious problem both among native English speakers and those people for whom English is a second language. While it is not feasible to launch a statistical survey to ascertain the extent of the problem, the observations of tutors and scheme organisers should give us some indication of the numbers of older people currently involved in basic education and possibly your experiences could also tell us something about those people that schemes are NOT reaching.

One of the reasons that Age Concern England thinks that illiteracy among older people is a cause for concern is that it seriously inhibits their ability to help themselves and, in effect, limits the extent to which they can play an active role in their communities and society. It also bars them from all the great pleasures of the written word and from taking part in many of the activities now developing to ensure a positive and active old age.

Any observations and comments you have would be greatly appreciated. Age Concern England is hoping to mount a national conference on Literacy and Older Adults sometime in 1990 but first we must ascertain those areas where we can and should make some positive contribution to the situation as it now exists.

Please write to Dianne Norton, Education & Leisure Office, Age Concern England, 60 Pitcairn Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LL.

University Certificate in Adult Basic Education

The University of Leicester, in conjunction with Leicestershire Adult Basic Education Service will be offering a certificate in ABE over two years. Topics covered include: The International Experience, Theory and Practice in Twentieth Century Britain, Good Practice and Specific Learning Difficulties. Costs, over two years, Leicestershire LEA Employees £800, other Applicants £1000. Further information: Margaret Herrington (0533) 662706.

Desk Top Publishing for Adult Literacy Materials

What can desktop publishing offer adult literacy? Yvonne Hillier, Adult Basic Education Organiser for the London Borough of Barking, explores the possibilities.

First of all there were typewriters and banda machines. Then there were photocopiers. These were followed by computers and word processors. Now there is desktop publishing, or DTP. Yet in adult literacy groups up and down the country, tutors are still having to produce material for their students by hand. Despite a revolution in the way in which worksheets and other materials can be produced, most tutors do not have access to the hardware that would enable them to take advantage of these innovations. Producing materials will be particularly relevant to the open learning centres that will shortly be operating. One of the features of these centres will be student centred material and resources. DTP offers an opportunity for tutors and organisers to produce professional material.

Starting as a novice

I was asked by the Polytechnic of East London to investigate just how DTP could be used in an adult literacy environment. The promise of access to an IBM computer was enough to gain my interest. High quality worksheets with high quality printers? I said yes and then panicked! There is a wealth of information on desktop publishing systems, however, I was starting as a novice. I had mastered some of the techniques of word processing with my poor typing skills but wonderful accompanying obscene language. DTP is in many ways quite different. Anyone familiar with word processing will know that text can be edited, stored and retrieved for future use. Instead of retyping text, it can be used for future occasions at the touch of a key. This facility is true to a certain extent with DTP, but some of the software is not as adaptable as wordprocessing packages. On the other hand, DTP allows remarkable flexibility in combining graphics with text.

In order to conduct the feasibility study, I needed to know what the system could do. This was a very time consuming element of the research. To help me, I was given a software package called 'Composer'. This is an open learning package which claims to be the complete desktop publishing tutor. It contained a terminology guide which was vital, a series of lectures on how printing has evolved and step by step instructions in the form of a course guide which takes one through the many facilities of the desktop publishing programme. Composer is designed to be used with another package called 'Fleet Street Editor'.

There are a number of important features of desktop publishing. One is its ability to take written material in the form of a text which has been placed on a disc by a word processor and use this in conjunction with graphics, i.e. diagrams or line drawings. These can be arranged in various ways on the page and the text can even 'flow' around the images. Items can be moved about the page so that layout becomes an important feature. With some systems, it is possible to scan photographs and other graphic material into the computer and these can be incorporated onto the page. More advanced systems have 'video grabbers', where an image can be produced instantaneously from video onto the screen. Another facility of the system is that text can be printed in a range of typefaces or fonts and the size of these can also be altered. This is measured in points, a point being one seventy second of an inch. Most fonts have particular standard points. A font can also be changed into italic or bold styles amongst other variations. It is possible to alter the spacing between letters or characters. This is known as kerning. Alternatively, the space between lines may be altered. This is known as leading.

Choices

If you consider that there are literally dozens of fonts available in desktop publishing systems, with different point sizes and styles, variations on the gaps between words, letters and lines, not to mention how the text can be placed on the page and how graphics can be incorporated, then you can understand how daunting it is to tackle a simple worksheet from a design point of view! I was lucky enough to attend a two day course on desktop publishing at the University of Reading. Here, with course members who were very advanced users of these systems, I saw how the design of any material can be quickly altered. What was most apparent from this course was that publishers and printers were working with material and discussing design and yet were unaware of the needs of the population in terms of the readibility of the material they were processing. It also became apparent that desktop publishing will enable a number of users to produce material without any previous tuition on design and layout. One thing that almost certainly can occur is a badly designed page which is almost impossible to read. The University of Reading had some wonderful examples of this. I tried to discover whether anyone had actually investigated readability of printed text. Apparently, there has been some discussion over the type of font called serif and non serif. The former has curved characters, and 'feet' on each character, and needless to say opinion is divided as to whether a serif font is easier to read than a non-serif font. With all the other variables, not to mention the difficulty of finding a way of testing the readability of material, it is hardly surprising that this area remains largely unresearched.

This led me to decide to look at a few fonts and set up a small investigation into how readable adult literacy students found them. I took a typical handwritten worksheet that a tutor had produced and got it placed on a floppy disk as text. The particular package used was Ventura, one of the most advanced desktop publishing systems currently available. Trying to hold all other variables constant in terms of layout, I chose seven fonts which were quite different from one another. I asked the tutors to work with their students, asking them what they thought of the fonts, the spacing between letters, words and lines and I asked the students to rank order the seven worksheets. An example of each of these fonts is shown.

I was surprised to discover that all the students rated two fonts in the top order and that one font was voted outstandingly last. I also included the handwritten sheet for students to compare the fonts with, and this was also given worst place. The most

popular font was Helvetica, a fairly standard font found on typewriters. Dutch (Times) was second and Courier and the italic version of Helvetica were all ranked by all the students in the same order. The worst font was in fact one that was not strictly speaking a font at all, but a handwritten style that the desktop publishing system can create by using a graphics system. This was rated as being as difficult to read as the ordinary handwritten worksheet.

This feasibility study, although small, does indicate a trend that warrants further investigation. If a particular font, in this case Helvetica, really does aid students in their reading of printed material, then surely literacy schemes should use this when producing their resources? Certainly, serif type fonts were more popular than non serif ones. Students did not consider spacing between words or lines as such an important issue, but the layout of the worksheet may have been a factor in this. Another finding was that the students began to discuss why they experienced difficulty with reading, and more importantly that often it wasn't so much their difficulty as the inadequacy of the material they were working with. One of the more exciting aspects of the study is that students can be involved in the design of material, giving feedback on various aspects. With DTP, once the text is on disk, it is very easy to make alterations in the design.

Issues

These issues have implications for adult literacy, not just in the design of material and resources but also in the way in which a truly student centred approach can be achieved. The findings indicate a real move towards making printed materials more readable, less confusing, less inhibiting. This also has implications for publishers of a wide range of material for public consumption. If it is so easy to change the font of any material with desktop publishing, as opposed to resetting print which was the case in the past, then surely adopting a house style that is more readable by the public must be a consideration? On the strength of a feasibility study with a range of adult literacy students in one college, there is at least some indication that a trend may exist.

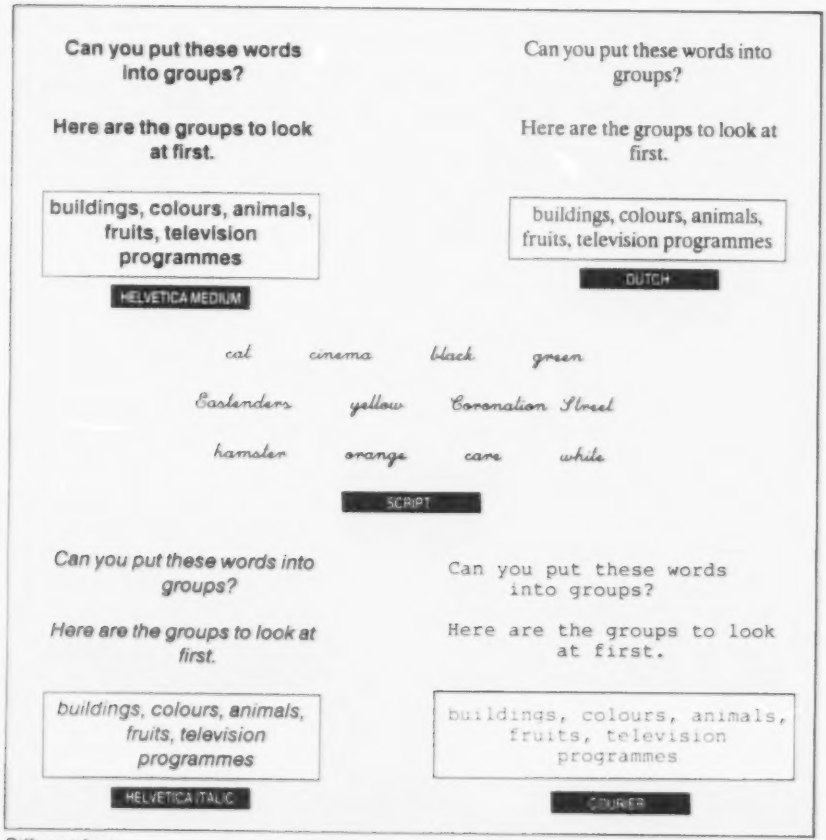
There are other implications that also arose from the study. The first is that of the time it takes to master desktop publishing. I am still very much a novice and I have invested countless hours playing with the IBM. Not all tutors and organisers are going to be able to do this. I had to find the time as I was commissioned to do so. If anyone is considering using a desktop publishing system, I would advise him or her to learn some basic wordprocessing skills first.

Another issue is that the hardware is a decisive factor. At one point I had managed to produce material including some pie charts using another package called 'Havard Graphics". Using an ordinary dot matrix printer I was at the time impressed with the result. However, when my other text material was produced at the Polytechnic with the aid of a very advanced laser printer which produced the copy almost instantaneously, there was no comparison. The feasibility study was certainly enhanced by the quality of the printer.

A corollary of the hardware issue is that of finance. How many adult literacy schemes are able to purchase the hardware for desktop publishing? There are many packages that work on cheaper machines, "Stop Press" is an example. Yet the quality of the print is far inferior to that of a laser printer. The packages also do not have enough capacity to store information and produce the variations in style that the user might require. I found Fleet Street Editor could not cope with large fonts or too many changes in one page. Venture definitely was more advanced.

Having fought my way around the various systems with next to no knowledge about them, I am beginning to think that the way forward is to have a networking system, where access to good quality hardware and software is given to tutors and organisers yet technical support is provided by key people. Once the main principles of desktop publishing have been learnt, all that is necessary is to be able to specify to a technician what layout is required. It would be less time consuming for tutors and yet would still allow them to respond to their students' needs in terms of the materials that they produce. Another possibility for schemes lucky enough to have hardware available for students to use is to work together to produce material, giving students the access to processes that require skills in drafting, proofing, editing and design. Finally, a word of warning. There are so many rules in the world of printing that users of desktop publishing will certainly break. A copy of 'Hart's Rules', the printer's Bible, would be a useful standby. More importantly, there is a real danger of using the facilities of DTP just because they exist, and not because they are appropriate. The net result is material that is too 'noisy'. If the research project is able to continue, I would like to discover whether there are any design principles for worksheets that desktop publishing necessitates. I suspect that there is an awful lot to learn from publishers; information which could be incorporated into desktop publishing manuals so that busy tutors and organisers can produce material that is of high quality, well designed, easy to read and responds to students' needs. And of course, doesn't cost too much! I'll keep you posted.

This project was undertaken under the direction of Dr Peter Woolliams at the Polytechnic of East London. Financial support from the National Advisory Board Special Initiative is gratefully acknowledged. I would also like to thank tutors and students at Barking College of Adult Education who took part in this study.


Can you put these words into groups?
Here are the groups to look at first.
buildings, colours, animals, fruits, television programmes
HELVETICA MEDIUM
Can you put these words into groups?
Here are the groups to look at first.
buildings, colours, animals, fruits, television programmes
DUTCH
cat cinema black green
Eastenders yellow Coronation Street
hamster orange cars white
SCRIPT
Can you put these words into groups?
Here are the groups to look at first.
buildings, colours, animals, fruits, television programmes
HELVETICA ITALIC
Can you put these words into groups?
Here are the groups to look at first.
buildings, colours, animals, fruits, television programmes
COURIER

Different fonts

MAKING A START WITH COMPUTERS

What positive contribution can computers make to the work of a literacy group? Chris Wakley, Basic Education tutor in Gwent Local Education Authority, gives an initial evaluation.

Really useful?

Are computers really useful in ABE work? To this question I would answer a resounding yes, and I'm only a beginner. I'm very lucky in that in the room next to the one used by the group of eight students and four volunteer tutors at the Pontllanfraith Centre there are seven BBC machines, ready for use when we want them. There is no special 'outing' to the computer room. We only began to use the computers in December after I had completed the ALBSU course on Computer Assisted Learning run in The Friary Centre in Cardiff by Janet Leonard, because I badly needed some computer knowhow. So now we are all learning together, tutors and students.

I'm very concerned that we use these computers appropriately, to reinforce what the students are doing and not just because they are there. At present we are beginning with word processing using Wordwise Plus, Edword and Folio. Word processing has so much going for it in literacy work. Students are encouraged to write using the word processor because it is so easy to edit their mistakes, they disappear without trace and can be forgotten. The finished piece of work looks good and this can be very important to the students. They can show it to other people with pride, and even the most reluctant writers will find something to put into print.

So how is it going in practice? At our first session using the computers I was not at all confident about my own computer skills but amazingly it went very well. Everything loaded as it should and no work was lost – beginner's luck perhaps! Of the eight students only Sue has been unwilling to use the word processor or even touch the keyboard.

Work at Pontllanfraith

Encouraging writing

John has always been a reluctant writer and is very conscious of his poor handwriting and spelling. He has been using Edword to write letters to friends in Australia. He enjoys the way he can edit out his mistakes without starting again from scratch. John does not have much patience and when he had to write letters by hand he became very frustrated at having to start again when he made a mistake. He likes to do everything quickly but he would not send a letter with errors in it because he wants it to look good. The word processor is ideal for John and he has also written a couple of short pieces about himself and we are encouraging him to do more. John is becoming quite confident about using the word processor and gains a lot of satisfaction from knowing that he has as much expertise as his volunteer tutor.

Keran is only 18 and has been used to using a computer at home to play games and so has taken to word processing very easily. She has no problems using the keyboard and is always keen to use the computer. She had been reading some of the ALBSU/Newmat series of books on different pop singers and was disappointed that there wasn't one on Bros. So I said: "Why not write your own?" Using the word processor means that it will be all her own work. She will probably use Folio because of its choices of style and because she has enjoyed using it in the past. At present she is collecting her ideas and making notes before she starts putting them into print.

Taking stock

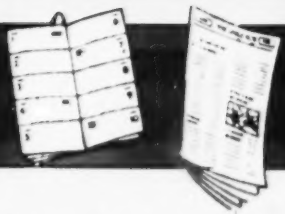
These two students are demonstrating the advantages of working with computers but they can cause problems as well. At first I found that we were concentrating too much on using the computers because they were new. It would be quite easy to become a 'computer group' rather than a 'literacy group'. That phase is behind us now and we only use the machines when we need them. I'm sure every group which uses computers will recognise the problem of the student who just wants to 'play' with the computer because it's easier than getting down to some real work!

We don't have much software at present and are currently assessing the usefulness of what we have. Some of the students are enjoying trying out the programs written by Peter Davy from Wakefield, particularly the one based on form filling. Keran and her friend Hayley have looked at some of the programs and have made a written record of what they have learnt and how much they have enjoyed it. We now have the "Wordprocessing for Literacy Skills" pack and I am planning to use this with tutors and students. Hopefully this will help to cut down on some of the cries for help and increase everyone's word processing skills.

Plans for the future include producing a group magazine for next Christmas. This was suggested last year but there was not the enthusiasm for it then because it would have just been a matter of writing an article. Now that we have a word processor the students can produce the whole thing themselves.

On the whole I have found that the word processor is slowly encouraging the students to write and I hope we can build on this in the future. Now, thanks to this article, it's even got me into print!

REVIEWS



Practical Communication

by Rod and Moira Ashley

Published by Collins Educational

Price: (Student's) £3.85
(Teacher's) £6.50

ISBN 00 327396 2
ISBN 00 327396 4

This book is designed for students following City and Guilds and RSA Communication Skills courses and for those following general courses with a communications component, including YTS and CPVE.

With this book students are given the opportunity to work through a variety of tasks that cover all aspects of communication relating to realistic situations that arise in study courses, at work and in our social lives. The three sections of the book cover multi-task assignments, multiple choice comprehension exercises and a section on basic skills such as letter writing, using the telephone and making/interpreting various charts and graphs. All of the assignments are clearly explained and presented, but the very fact that they use such items as 'Which?' reports, college timetables and H.P. tables means that some students may need a lot of support when interpreting/using the information given. Some of the assignments give good practice exercises that bring out the variety of skills involved in communication such as designing posters and recording telephone conversations.

The separate teacher's book gives suggestions for setting up multi-task assignments, transcripts of telephone conversations that can be transferred to tape, lists of objectives covered and skills practised in each assignment and some guidelines on assessment.

Use of some of the assignments with students following the C&G 362 Communications Skills course drew the following observations:

'enjoyable tasks', 'interesting layout', 'I found that I need to pay more attention to detail', 'The questions make you think hard. I know I have to read again and again to get the right answer', 'After this I'm not so worried about lots of information on one page'.

I feel that the assignments are demanding but realistic and cover the range of skills involved in communication in a practical way. The drawback? Expense. The usual photocopying restrictions apply so students need to work from the book. Having said that, I would recommend this one to anyone involved in a communication skills course as a very good book to "dip into" and as a resource to help individuals to practise specific skills.

Margaret Dawson and Students
Portsmouth ABE
Hampshire Education Authority

Basic Calculations

by Cleveland Open-Learning Unit

Published by Cleveland County 1987

Available from Cleveland Open Learning Unit, Holmwood, Orchard Road, Linthorpe, Middlesborough TS5 5PN

Price £45.00 incl. tutorial support

This is a series of nine slim A4 booklets each containing either 1 or 2 'lessons'. The whole series forms an open-learning module within a Process Plant Operation course available from Cleveland although, it could be used by others.

The module is *not* designed for basic numeracy students as it assumes an understanding of and familiarity with the four operations using integers. It covers fractions, decimals, metrication, averages, percentages, ratios, graphical representation, and formulae for calculating areas and volumes. All of this and much more within a recommended study time of 20 hours! (It really does make you wonder how secondary schools can pad it out to 2 or 3 years!).

The module is true to its title. This is a text for the dedicated number cruncher. Calculation follows calculation unrelieved by any contextual reference. Explanations also, are expressed exclusively in mathematical terms with no attempt to relate the process to familiar situations.

The language is unnecessarily difficult e.g. the X or horizontal scale on a graph is referred to as the 'abscissa', mention is made of the 'Cartesian system of axes' and the learner is encouraged to 'consolidate your understanding'.

There is a mass of text and a general lack of illustrations. However, on the positive side the typeface is clear and the calculations well spaced on the page.

One suspects this is a module written by mathematics lecturers used to a captive audience of technical students, and for some adult learners who are both highly motivated it may have some use.

The promotional material accompanying the pack refers to the number of students Cleveland Open Learning Unit have enlisted on off-shore rigs and platforms.

Perhaps that says a lot about the quality of life in the North Sea!

Terry Riley
Berridge Centre
Clarendon College
Nottinghamshire Education Authority

Multi-Lingual Wordprocessing and Voluntary Organisations - Report of a Conference

by Sally Burke and Paul Ticher

Published by Community Information Project, Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1

Price £2.50

This is a report of the first ever national conference and exhibition on multi-lingual word processing in voluntary organisations and community groups. It was held in London in June 1988 and attended by 200 delegates.

The report includes a list of exhibitors and participants and might be of interest to groups beginning to explore facilities for word processing in other than 'English' or 'Roman' script. However, it should be noted that only the barest details of the specialist word processors are given and that even this information may, by now, be out of date. The keynote speech by Nirveen Kalsi of Haringey Health Authority particularly emphasises the importance of multi-lingual wordprocessors as a step towards effective communication with (and by) the high percentage of the Asian community in Britain who speak little or no English.

Janet Ward
ABE Organiser
Friends Centre, Brighton and
Brighton College of Technology
East Sussex Education Authority

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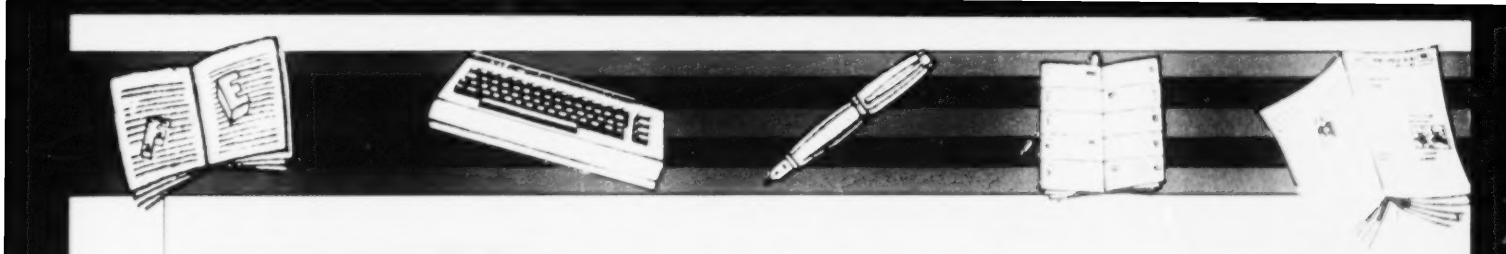


16 – 19 Society

by Pen Keyte

Published by Oxford University Press

Price £3.50

ISBN 8335342

As you could guess from the title, this book is intended to be used by sixteen to nineteen year olds. It presents material to allow students to examine families, groups, law, politics and community. It has 76 pages and a soft glossy cover.

The book aims to encourage students to examine facts/opinions and, through discussion and role plays, to draw their own conclusions about issues presented. Students using the book would have an opportunity to make sense of information presented in many different forms and of relating new information to their own experiences. They should also become quite adept at presenting information in appropriate formats. I think that this book does fit advertising standards – it is definitely fit for the purpose intended. It is slightly misleading in that it states "16 – 19 is for you to use on your own or in a group". To use the book on your own, you would need a divided personality and to enjoy your own conversation.

I don't think the book is suitable for older adults as it stands. Tutors could certainly use it as a source book and modify some of the sections for adults to work with.

Sally Murphy
Literacy Organiser
Bradford & Ilkley Community College
Bradford Education Authority

The Oxford Junior Dictionary – Second Edition

Compiled by Rosemary Sansome
Revised by Dee Reid

Published by Oxford University Press

Price £2.95

ISBN 0 19 910233 3

This is a completely revised edition which features many new words relevant to the modern world. It has 176 pages and a clear cover in the Oxford University Press' blues, red and green, and sharp print. The majority of students and tutors who used the dictionary were unhappy about the word 'junior' in the title and the introduction for teachers and parents implying it was only for children.

It has 5,000 entries in red type next to clear definitions and useful examples, although a few can be a little misleading:

about 1. almost
It's about four o'clock.
project 2. a plan

The definitions are printed in black type with examples in italics. It is very easy to read, the layout works well and the definitions are not child-orientated.

At the top of each page the alphabet is printed in heavy black type with the relevant letter to that page in red and this was universally liked as a guide to sequencing.

There is no stated guide to pronunciation but individual words are given bracketed guides:

dingy (say ding-ee)
tomb (rhymes with room)

As a starter dictionary this is a welcome addition to the department. Students and tutors enjoyed using it and felt it was a good beginning for dictionary work. We reviewed the more advanced Oxford Dictionary (see below) and felt that this Junior Dictionary could build confidence and skills to enable students to progress to the standard dictionaries.

The Oxford Study Dictionary

Compiled by Joyce M. Hawkins

Published by Oxford University Press

Price £2.50

ISBN 0 19 910242 2

This dictionary has been specifically produced by Oxford University Press to cater for the students working towards GCSE's. The 45,000 entries cover a wide range of subjects with examples of usage, and include words from science, history and languages. It has a list of the countries of the world which students felt was irrelevant and a list of the Chemical Elements which they felt was very useful for science work.

The entries are in bold black type and examples are given in italics. The majority of students found the print to be clear and the definitions concise and not cluttered with too many meanings which caused a great deal of confusion. The use of abbreviations caused difficulty for a number of students who were unable to follow the definitions clearly.

Unlike the Junior Dictionary the pages are headed in the usual manner in bold print. The dictionary is similar in the large size to be seen as a pocket dictionary, with 760 pages and the distinct Oxford University Press' blue, red and green cover. It has a robust paperback and is reinforced with a strong sewn binding – built to last. It received a great deal of use by various groups and certainly appears to be an excellent investment.

The majority of the students and tutors felt it was 'too big' for them but all felt it was a comprehensive dictionary ideally suited for the post-basic and pre-GCSE group it was aimed at.

Lesley Talbot-Smyrke
(with tutors and students)
Area Coordinator, ABE
and ALBSU Project Worker
North Kent Adult Education Service
Kent Education Authority

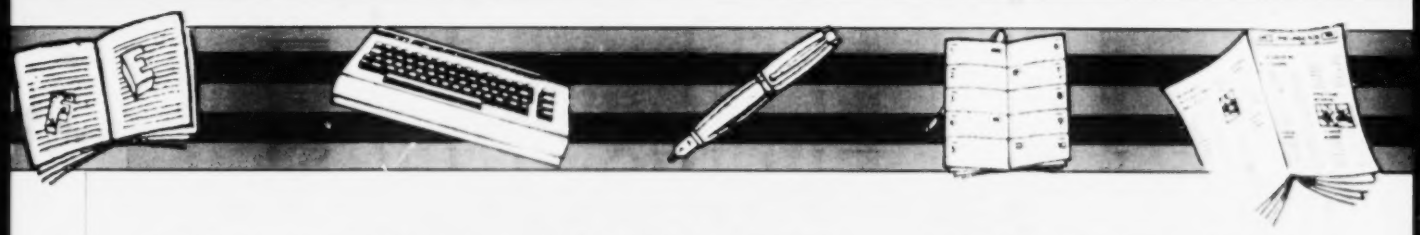
Technology and Us

by Students of the Mary Ward Centre and the Hammersmith Neighbourhood Literacy Scheme

Available from Hammersmith Literacy Scheme, 31 Fulham Palace Road, London W6

Price £1.00

This compilation of [illegible] photographs and line drawings [illegible] students each [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



A range of personal perspectives and views are represented, and, taken as a whole, the collection implicitly poses some questions and issues which might be further explored in discussion. A car assembly worker, made redundant by factory automation, writes: 'Thinking about all these questions made me realise that I would be free to do other things like perhaps training robots after all they may be efficient at doing a task but they cannot think which is something we certainly can do . . .' These words perhaps summarise why this collection can be of interest to other students, providing food for thought, with or without a word-processor.

Pat Lloyd
Open Learning Centre
Nottinghamshire Education Authority

Over and Out

by John Townsend

Published by Hutchinson

Price: £1.15

ISBN 0 09 182269 6

The Ramsbottoms

by Barbara Mitchelhill

Published by Hutchinson

Price: £1.50

ISBN 0 09 182264 5

If you and your students have a particularly banal sense of humour, then these recent plays in the Spirals series are for you. They follow in the tradition of previous highly entertaining short plays for two to six parts.

'The Ramsbottoms at Home' is based on the famous Pythonesque sketch where claims of poverty are continually exceeded prefaced by those worderful words 'Luxury . . . when I were a lad . . .' In this play, a snarling dog, an indolent father and weak willed son live with a hard working mother who doesn't seem to have noticed how much she is put upon. Black comedy indeed!

In 'Over and Out', the first play centres around a break-in but which ends up in a launderette by mistake, with a policeman and robber communicating by mistake with their walkie talkies. The punchlines are excruciating! Not wishing to give too much away, a fairly 'watered down' example would be when the policeman shouts 'This is the police and you are under a vest' (literally!) The second play involves a professor and a voice on radio . . . to say more would only spoil the ending.

If a group is well established and the students feel secure in reading aloud, these plays are very stimulating. It requires some fluency to obtain the most from the humour. There is scope for expression in the lines and the puns are successfully used. It forms an ideal starting point for students' own work. It also provides a focus for looking beyond words to obtain alternative meanings. However, not all students would wish to read these aloud and the material would be suitable for students to read by themselves. The advantage of the plays is in the manner in which groups can be encouraged to work together in an informal way. All the necessary sound effects are written in and the text is clearly presented. I would certainly recommend these highly entertaining books. Re-reading them with others hasn't diminished my sense of fun and it takes a well written piece to achieve that!

Yvonne Hillier
Barking College of Education
Barking Education Authority

Language Power: Communication Skills for a Multi-racial Society

by Bob Matthews

Published by National Extension College
18 Brooklands Ave, Cambridge

Price £19.50

ISBN 1 85356 011 1

'Language Power' sets out to serve a dual purpose: a resource book for teachers and a self-study pack for College students working on their own. It's in its former purpose that it will find more success.

It aims to help students develop, practise and have control over their spoken and written language skills whether or not English is their first language. It looks beyond the formal language structure, and examines *how* the language is used and for what purpose. It focusses on 7 "core" language functions used across the curriculum and in everyday life in many contexts.

The rather long introduction for teachers spells out the book's underlying philosophy, gives a comprehensive guide to its use, lists contents cross-referenced according to skill, function, topic and activity, and it also includes a bibliography of other sources of material.

The scope of the topics in 'Language Power' is refreshing and reflects a concern with global issues. The presentation and activities are varied and rarely dull. Answers to activities are supplied at the back of the book.

At times I feel too much pre-knowledge is assumed. Ideas are presented with relatively few examples, and tasks set with little explanation.

The layout in several activities is frustrating: you find yourself turning a page back and forth because a task is printed on the back of the source of information instead of opposite.

The quality of the production doesn't do justice to the book: the spiral bound cover falls off and the paper is thin. This can be overlooked in exchange for stimulating, informative *copyright free* materials to add to your scheme's or open learning centre's resource bank.

Jill Manley
Organiser for Adult Literacy
Dudley Education Authority

Literacy Research in the UK Adult and School Perspectives

Edited by Juliet McCaffery, Brian Street

Published by RAPAL

Available from Avanti, 25a Boulton Road, Pin Green, Stevenage SG1 4QX

Price £7.50 plus £1 p&p

ISBN 0 9513407 00

This text consists of contributions to a conference on Literacy Research in the UK held in 1987.

The first paper by Brian Street notes that the word 'illiterate' may be used

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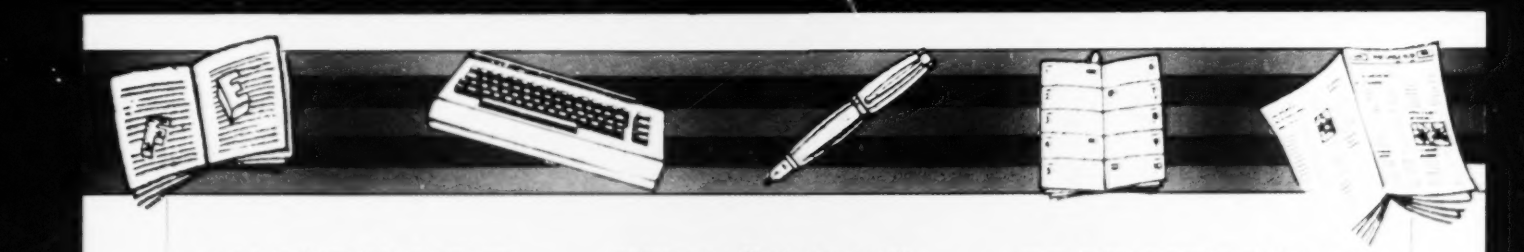

pejoratively and many societies ignore the wealth of ideas and notions that may be present in an oral tradition. He recommends research in which the learner participates and suggests that more attention should be paid to the spontaneous learning of literacy in the community, particularly how "helpers", friends, family, neighbours operate.

Juliet McCaffery considers the accessibility of research materials to practising tutors and the usefulness of historical description and analysis. She emphasises – in my opinion correctly – that professional researchers, professional and voluntary practitioners in the field and students may co-operate to illuminate each others work and to inform each other.

Michael Clancy contributes a fascinating account of teaching reading in the middle ages. Stephen Brain thoughtfully examines the role of autobiographical writing by working class authors in effecting social change. Mike Baynham examines contemporary issues for literacy research, in literacy, biliteracy and multiliteracy. The latter argues for a diversity of literacies rather than an insistence on one language mode for the United Kingdom.

Robert Merry's investigation into other activities than reading and writing in literacy schemes shows that the two greatest activities were producing books and magazines – literacy in action – and outings to museums, plays, etc – feeding literacy. Pablo Foster, writing on the management of essential adult learning, namely, adult literacy, adult basic education, special needs and English language work argues that much of educational management is authoritarian. The book is worth reading if only for the appendix 3 by Pablo called "A practical guide to discovering organisational culture".

The role of language forms the theme of the next two contributions, firstly by Roz Ivanic and David Barton, and then by Sue Gardener in an article called 'Language and Second Chance education". Sue Gardener deals with the development of written language with adult Fresh Start and Return to Learning programmes in a highly practical way showing, in particular, how mapping speech relations can help. Finally Judith Edwards restates the arguments for co-operation between researchers and practitioners.

Janet Maybin and Hennetta Dombey are the two contributors dealing with school literacy, arguing for parent participation in schools and creative, rather than error avoidance, approaches to teaching.

In short, the text is an interesting collection of perspectives of particular aspects of language and the role of researchers.

Alan Charnley
Research Director
NIACE

Bright Ideas: A Collection of Prose and Poetry by New Writers

by Adult Education Students

Published by The Scottish Community Education Council, Atholl House, 2 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
Price £2.00
ISBN 0 947919 25 2

This book was written, edited and designed by adult education students as part of a publishing workshop. The pieces have been selected from submissions gathered from different writing groups present at the workshop and results in a collection offering a variety of different styles and topics. Included are pieces on childhood memories, work experiences and human relationships and some pieces written in dialect. "A perra polis" is a humorous poem which I found to be an irresistable challenge. It took several readings for me to appreciate the final punch line:

"In ats no a best laugh thur baith deef n dum"

but it was well worth the effort. But what would the students in this area think of it? Here are some of their comments on particular pieces:

"It makes you want to scratch yourself ... good choice of words ... deliberately distasteful. Who would like to read it more than once?"
(provoked by "Swinging Sixties" recollections of the school nurse)

"I like this one ... although its about depression people in the same situation will get comfort from it ..."
(on "Unemployment")

"Read this if you can dare to bare the sorrow of the friend."
(on "The Choice" a poem about the pain of rejection)

And there were more.

It looks as if the editing group made some good choices. As a tutor I'm convinced it will be a very useful resource for getting students to think up some more "Bright Ideas" and maybe get into print too.

Yvonne Balakrishnan
ABE Co-ordinator
Gwent Education Authority

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available free to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills; those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229-231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017

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AUTUMN
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ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

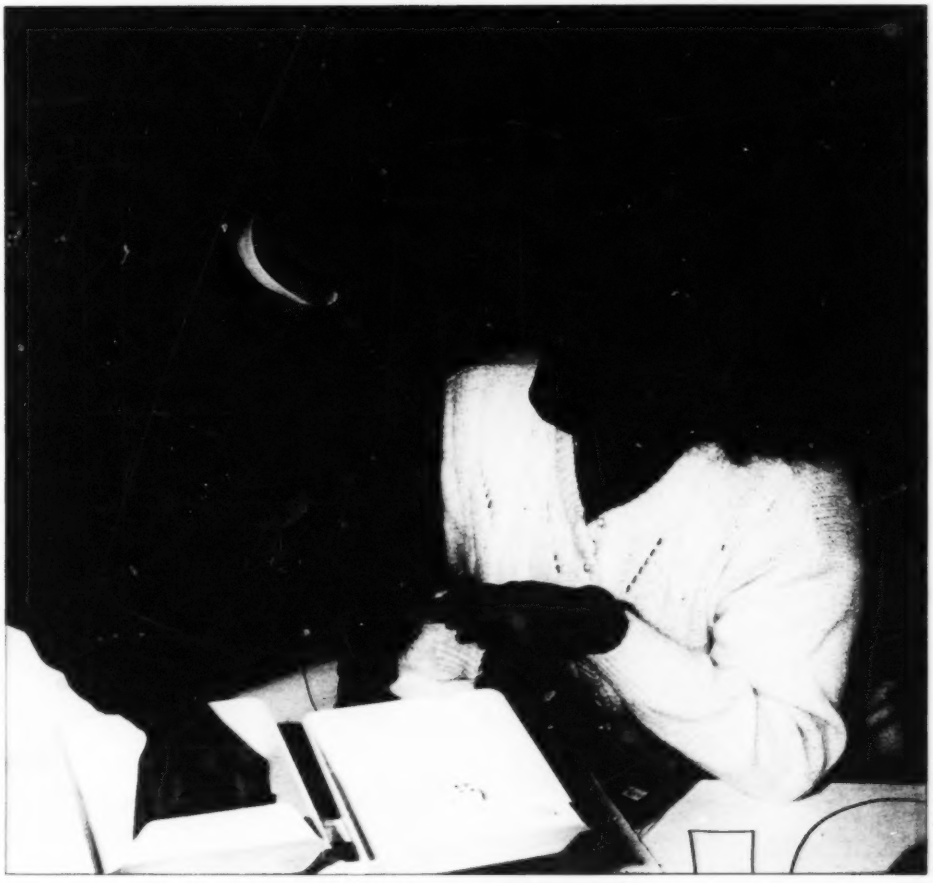

Photo Peter Ward

Barnet Local Development Project (see pages 2 and 3)

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INSERT

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ESOL
A NATION'S NEGLECT

In early September ALBSU published the results of the first national survey of the need for English language tuition amongst adults whose mother tongue is not English. At the same time the Unit published its recommendations to the government concerning the development of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in England and Wales over the next few years. This article outlines the findings of the survey and describes ALBSU's proposals for action.

It is perhaps surprising that so little information exists on the language needs of a substantial minority of our population. Moreover, it is surprisingly difficult to find out even some fairly basic information such as where different ethnic minority groups live and what first languages different people speak. Yet how can programmes be adequately planned and provision targeted if this crucial information is not available?

Part of the problem in convincing central and local government of the need for ESOL provision has been this lack of reliable information on the scale of need; certainly any concerted campaign for greater action and higher priority has been undermined by the lack of information to support the case. Central and local government tend not to be prepared to allocate funds on the basis of speculation!

ALBSU's remit in respect of ESOL has been confused for some time and it is hardly worth going into the intricacies of what the Unit can and cannot do. Clarification over the years has helped a little but it has not produced the resources necessary to stimulate and develop provision on a scale that recognises the level of need and demand. That some people who have been permanently resident in the UK for more than three decades don't know that help with English is available and that others who are aware of help cannot get the right type of help at the right time is an indictment of our post-school education system that should shame us all. At the very least it's time to take the need for ESOL seriously.

A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

In considering what ALBSU should do to raise awareness and make the case for additional funds and higher priority, the Unit recognised that we are not 'the only player in the field'. Nor is language provision the only educational need of ethnic minority adults in the UK. Other organisations such as the Further Education Unit (FEU), the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and its agencies UDACE and REPLAN, and other government departments including the Home Office and the Department of Employment also have a wider role in the development of continuing educational opportunities for ethnic minority adults and young people. Moreover organisations like the National Association for Teaching English and Other Community Languages (NATECLA formerly NATESLA) have played a creditable role in raising awareness and encouraging development with scarce resources over a number of years and will play a significant role in future development. Clearly it is not sensible for ALBSU, with all of the demands that face a small central unit, to attempt to do everything or supplant the work of these other organisations. ALBSU does believe, however, that it has a crucial role to play in increasing the profile and drawing the attention of funders to the need for long-term planning and clear policy development for ESOL. Moreover, despite all of the other demands on the Unit and the reluctance of some people to see ALBSU involved at all, the Unit cannot avoid its responsibility to ESOL. As Peter Davis, ALBSU's Chairman, said in commending "A Programme for Action" to John MacGregor, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and Peter Walker, the Secretary of State for Wales:

> *"If we fail to provide access to the crucial skill of English, we will continue to deny opportunities to a substantial minority of our population and waste a resource – the skills and attributes of people – crucial to the well being of our society".*

ALBSU decided, therefore, that we needed to consult with others involved or interested in ESOL and in the winter of 1988-1989 we held three national conferences – in London, Birmingham and Manchester – to encourage discussion as well as to set up a small Advisory Group to help us determine what needed to be done. We also decided that the need was so urgent that we should refocus some of our funds to commission a speedy piece of research into the scale and nature of the need for ESOL - a step strongly supported at the national conferences.

RESEARCHING THE NEED

The research, carried out by an independent research organisation, Research Resources Ltd., aimed to assess respondents' literacy in their own mother tongue as well as the ability to communicate in English. Other questions concerned reasons for wanting to improve English, whether or not people interviewed wanted help, whether they had ever received any tuition and whether they were aware of any local schemes which provided ESOL. Just over 1,000 adults were interviewed in 100 sampling points and over 50 different mother tongues were spoken by those interviewed.

Whilst a survey on this scale can never be seen as definitive (and more in-depth

research is urgently needed), the results indicate the likely scale of need.

21% of the people interviewed were unable to read in their mother tongue.

8% of the total sample had problems with literacy in both their mother tongue and English.

Proficiency in English (Self Assessed)

26% could understand English a little or not at all.

29% could speak English a little or not at all.

36% could read English a little or not at all.

40% could write English a little or not at all.

Reasons for improving English seen as very to extremely important:

Access to Employment – **57%**

Promotion prospects – **54%**

Helping children with school work – **63%**

Using public facilities, libraries, banks – **53%**

Shopping – **40%**

Making friends, leisure – **44%**

Knowing rights – **55%**

Numbers wanting more help with improving English

Yes – **53%** No – **47%**

Numbers reported as having received help by joining classes, neighbourhood schemes, etc.

Yes – **23%** No – **76%**

Numbers reported as being aware of local schemes and classes providing help

Yes – **41%** No – **59%**

If the results of this survey were consistent for the UK as a whole almost 500,000 adults permanently resident in the United Kingdom are in need of help with English. Moreover, a substantial number say that they want help yet current provision provides for less than 50,000 people at any one time and much of what is available is poorly resourced and provides only very part-time opportunities.

"A Nations Neglect" and "A Programme for Action" were published by ALBSU on September 4th. Copies of both documents are available free, from the Unit. They are also available in eight community languages.

SECTION II

Much ESOL provision is currently funded through Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 and administered by the Home Office. Just as the Unit was about to publish its research findings and proposals for development, the Home Office published the long awaited Scrutiny Report on the operation of Section II funding. The report suggested that Section 11 funding needs to be more closely targeted and more effectively monitored. It also recognises the case for improved opportunities for adults:

'With changes in the employment market flowing from reduced numbers of school leavers, employers will be looking increasingly to retraining workers. It is vital that non-English speaking adult members of the ethnic minorities should be provided with any necessary basic language tuition to allow them to make full use of the opportunities this will provide'.

A PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

Whilst recognising the role of other agencies and organisations, ALBSU believes that it is well placed to take some sharply focused initiatives over the next three years to develop ESOL provision. ALBSU's central concern with crucial communication skills means we are well placed to take such initiatives – initiatives which would gain much support and which would lay the foundation for more comprehensive development in the years ahead. These initiatives are focused on five key areas:

- Supporting, monitoring and evaluating ESOL.
- Sponsoring Development Projects.
- Improving Staff Development and training.
- Producing learning materials.
- Undertaking research.

CONCLUSION

Considerable consultation about ESOL has been a feature of recent years. Every so often it seems a period of consultation is undertaken by the various government departments involved in ESOL provision for adults, yet little action follows. Moreover debate has often concentrated more on semantics than on what needs to be done to develop adequate language provision. The net result has been that the very people all this activity is concerned with have been poorly served. Many of them are voiceless and powerless in our society; most have skills and talents rarely acknowledged and even more rarely released. High quality accesssible ESOL provision cannot solve all of the problems, but it can significantly contribute to giving people a voice and an opportunity to release their talents – talents which are sorely needed by our society.

Press conference launching "A Nation's Neglect" chaired by Peter Davis, Chairman ALBSU Management Committee.

GOING DUTCH

a shared experience in ABE staff development

Bob Read, ABE Co-ordinator for East Norfolk, outlines a thought provoking exchange visit.

Making Links

As a preface to International Literacy Year a recent ALBSU newsletter article emphasised the need for closer links between ABE practitioners in different European countries. (Issue 32, Winter 1989, *Literacy and ABE in Industrialized Countries*). This very topical wish for greater co-operation may sound well in political and economic debates, but what are the benefits of becoming involved in such links for the average part-time ABE tutor? How would such links benefit students? The box of Spirals, the spelling worksheets, the hastily simplified newspaper articles and Tippexed cloze texts – would that be of any interest to other tutors at a weekend ABE conference in Holland?

These concerns and anxieties were very much in the minds of fifteen ABE tutors as they travelled to Maastricht in May for a 5-day conference with Dutch ABE colleagues. The idea for the conference had developed out of informal contacts between ABE staff in Norwich and Maastricht the previous year. The aim was to provide a forum for an exchange of ideas on the organization, teaching methods and resources in ABE in both countries. The conference participants and contributors would all be ABE practitioners themselves. English ABE tutors came from Norfolk and Suffolk; the Dutch participants all live and work within the southernmost province of the Netherlands called Limburg.

In addition to the four main conference presentations on literacy, numeracy, ESL and special needs, English tutors would also have opportunities to visit ABE groups. They would be accommodated in the homes of Dutch tutors attending the week-end event and so outside the context of the conference sessions tutors would have opportunities to continue to explore areas of shared concern.

Through these formal and informal discussions it became clear during the visit that there were many reassuring similarities, as well as some thought provoking and challenging differences in provision in both countries. In preparation for the conference both groups had exchanged papers containing basic information about national and local ABE provision in each country. Prior to the conference it was clear then that in the Netherlands ABE tutors also teach basic skills within a functional context, stressing language experience approaches. Similarly, there is a strong emphasis on negotiated programmes of study and the use of adult materials within an informal and relaxed learning environment.

Differences

What then were the Dutch variations on this familiar theme? A bold generalization would be that the most striking differences concerned organization rather than educational aims and teaching approaches. During the initial stages of the conference English ABE tutors commented regularly on these organizational differences and their influence on the quality of provision. It may also be useful perhaps to begin with these differences before considering the areas of agreement and shared concern.

Until 1987 ABE work in the Netherlands greatly resembled the early adult literacy provision here in England in the late 1970's. There was a wide variety of local independent literacy schemes and various educational initiatives for ethnic minority groups. Tuition was organised using volunteer tutors, rented accommodation, and funding was obtained from a range of sources. In 1987 government legislation standardized the aims, structure and funding of the network of projects across the Netherlands. The term Basic Education was introduced and was defined as:

> *'educational activities which make it possible for adults to acquire the minimum knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to enable them to take a full part in the life of the community.'*

Some of the most striking aspects of Dutch ABE provision seem to derive mainly from the consequences of the 1987 legislation. They provoked a mixture of admiring and critical comments from the visiting English ABE tutors:

> *'I was greatly impressed by the Basic Education Centre I saw. Tutors actually had their own centre, spacious and airy, with teaching rooms and storage space, a lounge area, and their own photocopier!'*

Since 1987 all Dutch ABE tutors are attached to a local 'Basic Education Centre'. There are 18 centres in Limburg. The centres are funded by government grants and their performance is monitored regularly and quite closely by visiting Inspectors from the Department of Education. At the centres a wide range of adult education activities takes place. Literacy and numeracy classes are just one part of a very wide programme of vocational activities for disadvantaged groups. Dutch tutors are aware of the possibility that this centralization of provision may be off-putting to some ABE students who are ill at ease in a school-like environment. Classes are therefore still held in other rented accommodation out 'in the community'. In this way a flexible and accessible form of provision is achieved while tutors still benefit from a well-resourced teaching base. However, Dutch tutors are concerned about the prospect of even greater centralization in the near future. It will probably mean staff reductions and less 'outreach' work.

> *'I was worried that in theory ABE students were only entitled to so much tuition and then had to move on . . .'*

Since 1987 the amount of ABE tuition per student has been limited to 1000 teaching contact hours over a maximum of 5 years. Dutch ABE staff are obviously anxious about the educational wisdom of this restriction. The number of student contact hours is monitored closely at all ABE centres for other reasons as well. Government grants are allocated to centres on the basis of annual records of student contact hours. Maintaining a 'healthy' record of contact hours seemed a constant and understandable preoccupation for staff at ABE centres. Their jobs depended on it!

> *'I was impressed with the range of ABE activities for women.'*

About 70% of ABE students in Limburg are women. Indeed, 85% of ABE tutors in the Netherlands as a whole are also women. In addition to basic literacy provision, there are computer literacy classes, single parent groups, benefit rights groups, vocational preparation courses, immigrant groups, etc., all designed for women students and supported by child-care facilities.

> *'It was interesting that learning English is actually part of ABE for Dutch students.'*

A basic grasp of English is seen as an essential life skill in the Netherlands and almost all ABE tutors teach English at some level. These English groups are very popular and are an important factor in maintaining a viable level of student contact hours within the centre as a whole. High student enrolment for such groups helps therefore to protect literacy groups with much lower student numbers and poorer attendance records.

'What the Dutch call 'special needs' is not what we mean by 'special needs'!'

Most Dutch ABE tutors work within general ABE classes, women's groups or in provision for ethnic minorities. Broadly speaking, they are not extensively or officially involved in say, work with people with mental handicaps or adults recovering from mental health problems, since such work does not fall within the scope of Basic Education as defined by the legislative reforms of 1987. Much progressive work in this field is undertaken in Holland but involves professionals from other disciplines. It appears that although the term 'special needs' was used by Dutch tutors, it had a much more restricted meaning than in England, suggesting only a greater degree of social and educational underprivilege.

'I was a little confused by their use of volunteers!'

As are the Dutch from all accounts! Before 1987 the use of volunteer literacy tutors was comparable to our own. Many had a background in primary school teaching. Since 1987 the aim has been to 'professionalize' ABE. New tutors, paid or unpaid must be able to indicate specialist training or relevant background in adult education, and the use of unqualified volunteers is rare now.

However, Dutch tutors realize the need to provide 1-to-1 support within literacy groups and so 'volunteers' are still found working alongside group tutors. Many of these volunteers are often as well qualified as the group tutors and it seems that the challenge and enjoyment of ABE teaching still makes volunteer tutoring an attractive form of unpaid work. There was some disagreement amongst Dutch tutors themselves about the role and value of volunteers and their future within ABE. Nevertheless it was clear that there is no regular induction and training of volunteer ABE tutors comparable to common practice in England.

Areas of agreement and common concern related to teaching methods, resources, and the common learning problems, backgrounds and aspirations of ABE students. It became clear that irregular part-time teaching hours, together with much travelling to and from groups are a common cause for complaint amongst tutors in both countries and can make teaching in ABE a lonely experience. Regular professional contact with colleagues was therefore felt to be essential in sustaining enthusiasm and creativity. An opportunity to discuss teaching strategies, materials and resources at an 'international' level was therefore particularly stimulating.

Dutch as a Second Language

English tutors were greatly interested in the methods of teaching Dutch with non-native groups. Teaching Dutch as a Second Language (DSL) is an extensive area of work for Dutch ABE tutors and one in which they have considerable expertise. The Netherlands of course has its own particular immigrant groups that reflect its colonial history, for example, in Surinam, the Antilles and Molucca. Within Limburg itself the composition of immigrant groups receiving help with Dutch shows the additional influence of the local coal mining industry that used to attract many foreign workers about twenty years ago. Most of these workers came from Morocco and Tunisia. The decline of the industry in the last decade or so has meant a rise in local unemployment, a need for workers to retrain and an increase in demand for DSL provision.

In the area of second language teaching Dutch researchers and tutors have devised and adapted several detailed and extensively structured programmes. English tutors felt it was important to discuss with Dutch tutors the ways in which the immediate practical needs of students were accommodated within these programmes. Another important and shared area of concern was the extent to which the teaching of a second language may perhaps also propagate values, behaviour patterns, and attitudes that may conflict with students' cultural backgrounds.

Similar concerns

Within the context of both literacy and numeracy it was also fascinating and reassuring to note amongst Dutch tutors the familiar ABE wrangle about assessment, namely the need for perceptive and effective disgnostic assessment without formal testing procedures. There was in this connection some slight confusion about 'entrance tests' for college courses, the armed forces, nursing, etc., which are often the basis of student requests for maths help in England. It seems that this kind of specific request for help with numeracy skills is not common in the Netherlands. Most numeracy tution focuses on functional topics and is provided in the linked skills approach underlying ABE teaching in general. Consequently, there are fewer numeracy groups than in England.

English tutors discovered that Dutch ABE students also have a taste for stories with a macabre, Spiral twist . . . Often too the most accessible and meaningful factual reading texts were typed and photocopied versions of student writing about hobbies and interests. As in England tutors wished more of that kind of reading material would be considered and distributed by national publishers.

It was interesting to hear some honest confessions from Dutch tutors that much expensive commercial teaching material bought with enthusiasm and expectation never actually left the resource cupboard. At the same time, it was the tutor-devised work-sheets on say, percentages or a topical news item that were highly valued and shared most regularly amongst colleagues.

It was strange that within the context of so much efficient national re-organization of ABE in the Netherlands since 1987 there was still no source of good-quality colour posters, hand-bills, etc. A display of publicity material provided by ALBSU was therefore much admired.

There was frequent discussion about the difficulties of working on short-term courses for the long-term unemployed. Both Dutch and English tutors were aware that vocational ABE on such courses attracted extra funding and teaching hours, but they also shared concern about the pressures of working in this form of provision, e.g. the need for quickly achievable learning outcomes and a high turn-over of students, coping with motivational difficulties and the threat of loss of benefit for non-attendance on courses.

In almost every small group discussion there arose the question of coping with mixed ability groups, the value of working with themes, the need for adequate staffing ratios and more specialist in-service training and guidance on, for example, dyslexia.

And at all points, in main conference presentations as well as over a beer on a sunny cafe terrace the discussions returned of course to students, to success stories, to common learning problems and social factors, to examples of educational disadvantage and instances of great personal achievement.

In identifying the various areas of similarity as well as differences in basic skills provision in both countries, the conference was successful in creating for all participants a stimulating and wider perspective on the challenge of ABE in its many forms. It also established many contacts and friendships that have developed and formed a basis for a regular exchange of ideas and materials. 'Going Dutch' was for us a shared experience of great personal and professional value. Why not find out about becoming involved in a similar link?

photo Sharon Warnes

Magazine exhibition

NATIONAL WRITING FESTIVAL

What brought 240 students, tutors, elected members and Chief Education Officers together in Newtown, Powys, on July 10? In this article Margaret Morris, Project Officer for the ALBSU/ WJECU Wales Writing Development Project, describes what happened at the National Writing Festival.

On July 10th, 240 students, tutors and Further Education Officers, from all parts of Wales, suspended their normal Saturday routine activities and descended on Montgomery College in Powys to celebrate the fact that "Writing is for Everyone".

This one-day event provided national focus for the work of the ALBSU/WJEC Student Writing Project in Wales which has been in operation since January 1988 and aims to stimulate ideas and offer more opportunities for personal or "creative" writing in ABE work.

For the first time ever, students and tutors from all parts of Wales were provided with an opportunity to meet and work together at improving their writing skills. It was hoped that this meeting would facilitate the exchange of ideas and the formation of links between the eight counties that were represented.

Mr Alan Rustad, a newscaster from HTV Wales, got the day off to a good start when he performed the opening ceremony at the College Theatre. He described his early career as a reporter for a local newspaper, and some of his more hair-raising broadcasting experiences. He also went on to endorse the message of the day that everyone should have the chance of recording their thoughts in writing.

WORKSHOPS

Budding writers quickly dispersed into one of the four writing workshops on offer. They had a choice of poetry, play, short story or newswriting and these workshops were led by experienced, published writers and lecturers who were able to give some expert advice on their craft. Some of these writers were sponsored by the "Writers on Tour" scheme run by the Regional Arts Association in Wales. This scheme has been used to good effect with smaller groups during the period of the project.

People worked in groups, pairs and on an individual basis to produce their writing and were encouraged to work with somebody new in order to foster self-confidence and co-operation.

The same workshops were repeated in the afternoon to enable everyone to have a second choice. Shortage of time due to an over-extended lunch period meant that the contents of these sessions were condensed, but there was still time to explore some ideas on the different formats which could be expanded back at ABE bases.

Some of the experts who were unfamiliar with the nature of ABE work expressed interest in having more contact with ABE groups in the future, as they were impressed with the enthusiasm and determination to overcome difficulties that the students demonstrated in the workshops.

When rough drafts were completed, students were able to edit them on the word processing programs that were available in the computer workshop and those who wished could also illustrate their work by choosing a suitable picture from an array of graphic resources. This enabled many students to take away professional-looking printed versions of their written work.

EXHIBITIONS

In the time available between the workshops, people were able to look at the displays of work and resources that had been collected during the course of the project.

Earlier in the year, ABE groups had been invited to submit fascinating facts about Wales. A selection of these was displayed on a wall-hanging, representing Wales, its county boundaries and the location of ABE groups.

The tutors and students from Ammanford in Dyfed had expended tremendous effort in order to complete it in time for the festival. During the process of making the wall-hanging (which was recorded in words and photographs in their log), they had gained skills in literacy, numeracy, dying material, sewing, map-reading, caligraphy and record keeping. They all agreed it had been a very worthwhile project and were delighted with the interest their work aroused on the day.

Laura Ashley industries, who provided the material, and the West Wales Arts Association helped to sponsor the wall-hanging which now has pride of place at the Cennen Centre, where it was made.

Also on display were the magazines which ABE groups had been invited to submit, together with logs/diaries recording the processes involved in producing them. Just before the festival, a panel of people had been invited to read and respond in a positive manner to these publications. The comments of the panel, which highlighted the best qualities of each magazine, were displayed on a certificate which was later presented to a representative from each group, together with a book token. It was the first time that most of our students had had a wider audience and a positive written response to their work and it proved a great boost to the self-confidence of all students and tutors who took part.

Some of the best features to emerge from this exercise were the democratic decision making and group co-operation that were fostered during the planning and production of the magazines, and many of the groups are determined to make this a regular feature of their ABE work. The mazagines have now started their journey around Wales so that more people will have the opportunity to see them and comment on them.

During the lunch-break some students from Port Talbot in West Glamorgan manned a stall showing their work. These students have formed their own writing circle and meet throughout the year in order to write. Spurred on by their volunteer tutor, Phil, they have produced a vast quantity of poems, short stories and reminiscences. Some of their poems have been illustrated and made into posters by the art students at Swansea Tertiary College and some made into post-card size photo-poems by the printing department at Swansea University. Another student from Swansea, who has just organised a writers' circle and joined a desk top publishing course, also displayed his work. These students are always happy to discuss their work with anyone who expresses any interest.

No opportunity was wasted for encouraging people to write on the day so those with time to spare were invited to "Crack-a-joke", enter a word search competition (on the theme of writing) or write a comment about the day for the Talking Wall.

Everyone was also asked to write a poem, message or joke for the balloon launch which took place in the car park during the afternoon. Luckily there was a strong breeze to lift the balloons over the Welsh hills and letters have since been received by some lucky people from Welshpool, Stoke-on-Trent and Leek in Staffordshire which indicates how far some of the balloons travelled.

BROADSHEET

During the day, one of the students, Simon, had acted as roving reporter. Using a small cassette recorder and microphone, he recorded off-the-cuff comments which he later transcribed for the broadsheet. "The Festival News" was produced during the course of the day, thanks to our efficient secretary/PA, Janis, no mean feat, as anyone who has ever chased up contributions and pasted-up copy will tell you. Copies were handed to everyone as a momento of the day and by popular request this has been followed up by the "Post Festival News" which includes some of the comments made about the day.

photo: Sharon Warnes

Balloon launch.

SHARING SESSION

Althouth not much time was available for developing and extending pieces of written work, ideas abounded and some people found that working to a tight deadline actually sharpened up and improved their style. The quality of some of the written work was brought home to us during the final sharing session when selected pieces were read out. It is quite daunting to be faced with 240 people seated in square formation in a college theatre, but many students rose to the occasion and read their own work to an appreciative and emotionally moved audience.

We packed a lot into the Festival; this was deliberate because we did not know whether we would have another opportunity to get ABE students and tutors together on such a large scale again.

We hope the day achieved its aim of presenting many ideas for stimulating more personal creative writing in Wales. Hopefully, groups have been stimulated enough to carry on producing tangible evidence of their writing skills for others to appreciate.

The Festival would not have worked without the excellent team effort made by those who planned and executed the day. The planning team was made up of representatives of each county in Wales, ALBSU, WJEC, HMI and WEA who also act as a very supportive steering committee for the project. Neither would it have worked without the splendid efforts of dedicated tutors and students from all over Wales who have proved they have the talents necessary to develop the craft of writing.

It seems appropriate to leave the last words on the Festival to one satisfied customer:

"It was the most enjoyable day I ever had, it was a change from a boring weekend at home. It was great fun and a good laugh meeting new people and making new friends. Everybody seemed to have a good time. I think the Festival was a success".

(Sian Roberts, student, Anglesey Gwynedd)

Information

THE INITIAL CERTIFICATE IN

TEACHING BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS

An initial certificate programme has been under development since September 1988. As part of that development, Jenny Brown of Avon LEA was seconded to the Unit to review practice in initial training and collect examples of good practice. Many local schemes were consulted and as a result of this preparatory work an "Initial Certificate in teaching Basic Communication Skills" has been devised in conjunction with City and Guilds, who will be the validating body.

What is the Certificate?

The Initial Certificate is a pre-service training programme for tutors intending to teach literacy or numeracy to adults or young people over 16 years of age.

Who is it intended for?

The Certificate is intended for tutors who will be working in a variety of settings including:

- adult education centres;
- colleges of further education;
- vocational training schemes (including Employment Training and the Youth Training Scheme);
- prisons or probation services;
- industry or business.

Entry requirements

Entry to the scheme does not depend upon formal requirements or qualifications although course providers are likely to assess candidates' aptitude and ability to complete the programme.

Initial Training Programme

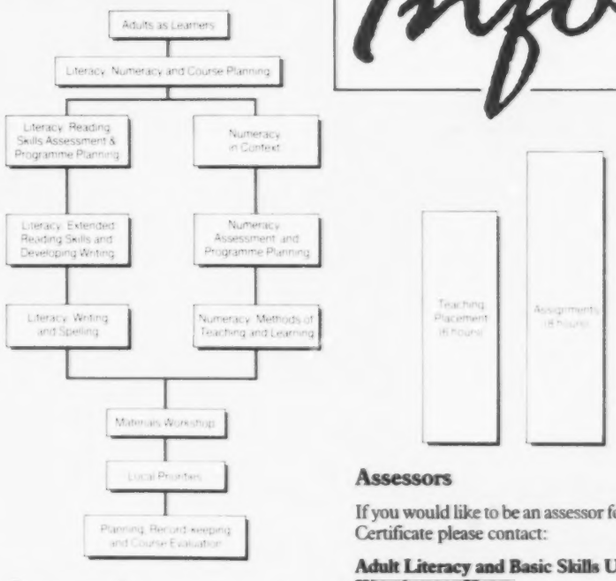
The programme for the Initial Certificate includes a total of 30 hours of activity comprising:

- 16 hours of course tuition;
- 6 hours of placement in a teaching situation;
- 8 hours of assignment work.

Two routes towards achieving the certificate are possible. Candidates may opt for either Literacy or Numeracy training.

Initial Certificate: An Outline

The Course (16 hours)


Adults as Learners
Literacy, Numeracy and Course Planning
Literacy: Reading Skills Assessment & Programme Planning
Numeracy in Context
Literacy: Extended Reading Skills and Developing Writing
Numeracy: Assessment and Programme Planning
Literacy: Writing and Spelling
Numeracy: Methods of Teaching and Learning
Materials Workshop
Local Providers
Planning, Record-keeping and Course Evaluation
Teaching Placement (6 Hours)
Assignments (8 Hours)

Assessment

Assessment is by satisfactory completion of a number of assignments and practical tasks. A "record of achievement" will be provided by City and Guilds for each participant and this will provide a structure for the assessment process. Each centre will have a visiting assessor appointed by ALBSU and City and Guilds. The assessor will ensure work undertaken is to a satisfactory standard.

When will the Certificate be available?

Centre approval and the appointment of assessors will begin in Autumn 1989 and the Certificate will be available to candidates from January 1990.

Cost

The cost of certification by City and Guilds will be £20 per candidate although there are likely to be additional charges locally for tuition fees.

Centre approval

If you wish to offer the Certificate at your Centre please ask for a Centre Approval Form from:

Division 23
City and Guilds of London Institute
46 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9RG
Telephone: 01-278 2468

Assessors

If you would like to be an assessor for the Certificate please contact:

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
Kingsbourne House
229-231 High Holborn
London WC1V 7DA
Telephone: 01-405 4017

Candidates

If you would like to be a candidate for the Certificate a list of approved Centres will be available from City and Guilds from January 1990.

Copies of a publicity leaflet are available from the Unit free of charge.

A handbook is also available from the Unit although supplies may be limited.

A pack of materials for trainers operating the Scheme will be published by the Unit in November 1989.

The Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative was launched on September 27th and the first BBC programmes designed to support the Initiative were broadcast on local radio in the first week in October. The first television programme 'Stepping Up', went out on October 8th. The second series, 'Step Up to Wordpower', starts on November 19th. The national radio support is largely being directed to tutors and trainers. Notes to accompany the series "Using Your Wordpower", broadcast from October 8th, are available from:

BBC Education, London W5 2PA

Please enclose a large s.a.e. (at least 9" x 7") with a 28p stamp.

Wordpower writing, the second radio series, is broadcast from 19th November at 5.00pm on Radio 4 FM Options. A fact sheet will support this series.

The new qualification

Twelve units which can be separately accredited have been developed. Five of these form the City & Guilds Foundation Certificate in Communication Skills (Wordpower). For the Stage 1 Certificate accreditation for these five units requires a higher standard of performance in more complex communicative situations and with more complex materials. Two further units complete the Stage 1 Certificate.

Foundation Units

1. Read textual material
2. Read graphical material for everyday purposes
3. Complete forms and preformatted documents
4. Communicate in writing
5. Converse with one other person

Stage 1 Units

1. Read textual material
2. Read graphical material for everyday purposes
3. Complete forms and preformatted documents
4. Communicate in writing
5. Converse with one other person
6. Converse with more than one person
7. Extract information from audio visual material

Further information on accreditation from:

BSAI 8th Floor
Kingsbourne House
229-231 High Holborn
London WC1V 7DA

Further information on assessment from:

Division 31
City and Guilds of London Institute
46 Britannia Street
London WC1X 9RG

The Rt. Hon. Timothy Eggar, Minister of State for Employment, Michael Checkland, Director General of the BBC and Peter Davis, Chairman ALBSU Management Committee, at the launch of the Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative.

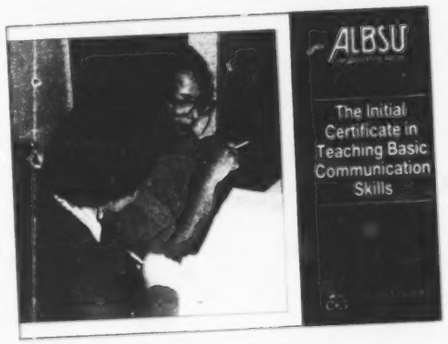
Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme

The LEA Training Grants scheme for the financial year 1990/91 includes a new National Priority Area for training to develop competence in adult literacy and basic skills.

The DES has asked ALBSU to advise on the eligibility of bids.

Eligible training includes:-

- The ALBSU/City and Guilds Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills: for staff new to adult literacy or numeracy teaching (See information above).
- The ALBSU/City and Guilds Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills: for staff who have been in service for six months or more.
- The R.S.A. Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Adult Basic Education: for staff with more extensive experience in adult basic education work.



In some cases local training will be eligible if it fulfils certain criteria.

Further information on the ALBSU/City and Guilds Certificates is available from ALBSU. Information on the RSA Diploma is available from the R.S.A.

ALBSU's Annual Report for 1988-89, which includes statistics on the provision of literacy, numeracy and ESOL work throughout England and Wales was published on September 8.

Copies are available, free, from the Unit. Please send a large (A4) size sae.

J. & J. DYSON P.L.C.

Dear Editor,

The Sheffield TEC Development Team is spending a great deal of time 'getting up to speed' with, amongst other things, training provided in our City and best practice elsewhere.

With this latter point in mind, I have just read your 'Newsletter No. 34 September 1989', and write to congratulate you upon the quality of articles and the practical relevance of the content – it has become essential reading for me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Richard D. Field OBE
Chairman – Sheffield TEC Planning Group

The National Association for the Teaching of Engish has published a 14 page illustrated leaflet "Helping Your Child with Reading and Writing" in Bengali, Gujerati, Punjabi, Urdu and English. Copies (70p a copy; £3.50 for 5 copies) are available from:

Mrs Lyn Fairfax
Publications Administrator
NATE Office, Birley School Annexe
Fox Lane, Frecheville,
Sheffield S12 4WY

DARTs

Developing Independent Readers

Ellayne Fowler, who has worked in literacy at Chippenham Technical College, Wiltshire and who has also done basic skills work in YTS and with the probation service, sets out ways in which DARTs can be used to encourage active and independent reading skills.

This article looks at a range of methods for developing reading skills. Directed Activities Related to Text (DARTs) offer a range of activities that foster independent reading.

DARTs were developed in a Schools Council "Reading For Learning" project undertaken at Nottingham University between 1978 and 1982, under the directorship of Keith Gardner and Eric Lunzer. Although this project was centred on children it has relevance for those of us working with adults. They were aiming to foster independent reading beyond 'receptive reading'. This is defined as reading of an even pace and an unthinking acceptance of words. This type of reading involves literal comprehension often at a word-based level. Lunzer and Gardner proposed that the key to becoming a 'flexible' reader (that is one who can cope with different writing styles and different reading purposes) is 'reflective reading'. This is where the steady pace of reading is broken by the reader so that they can note something, think over a point in the text or review it. At this point the reader is actively involved with the text. DARTs offer methods that allow readers to practise and establish this method of reading.

Who would find them useful?

These methods are useful for developing reading, beyond the literal, word-bound level. As such we have found them effective for readers (at all levels), ESOL students and craft students seeking support with study skills. With this last category DARTs not only help with reading but also with learning the subject the student is studying. With all these categories of student the choice of a relevant text is essential (see later).

What are they?

DARTs were evolved to use reading as a way of learning a 'subject'. With adults, an interest in the 'subject' can be the key to improved reading, because the knowledge we bring to the text aids our understanding. DARTs offer ways of putting SQ3R into practice (Survey, Question, Read, Review, Remember).

One of the principles of DARTs is that reading is no longer seen as a solitary activity. Discussion is an important element of the reading process, providing an opportunity for a student to check their interpretation of text against others. In practice this can be a small group or pair of students or a student and tutor.

DARTs divide into the *analysis* of text and the *reconstruction* of text.

Analysis of Text

In the analysis of text students see the text as a whole and the tasks are aimed at going beyond the words to the ideas that underlie the text. The activities are outlined below.

1. Underlining – this is the selective underlining of words or elements of the text e.g. types of information, parts of speech. This can be used as a basis for further DARTs work or written work.

2. Segmenting – this is a more difficult task than underlining and involves breaking the

At birth . . . and before

causes of death

still-birth

Foetal still-birth

Placenta

disease

When to call the vet

LAMB CARE

Most lamb losses are put down to still-birth, hypothermia, infection or trace element deficiencies.

Still-birth means the birth of a dead lamb and the problem can be divided into two.

The first type is a foetal still-birth, where the lamb died before the birth process had even begun. Foetal still-birth is most common in multiple pregnancies and is often caused by an inadequacy of the placenta, the organ through which the growing foetus obtains food and oxygen.

The placenta develops in the first half of the pregnancy and poor nutrition then can lead to poor growth of the placenta and the death of the foetus in the last few weeks before lambing.

Foetal still-birth may also be related to disease, including pregnancy toxaemia and toxoplasmosis.

Some foetal still-births will always happen but if more than 2 per cent of lambs are affected, take veterinary advice, for you probably have a problem, either of nutrition, disease of both.

1. This is an example that shows an agricultural student adding his own labels (done in group session).

work into segments e.g. themes, paragraphs. The student has to ask questions of the text rather than simply accept what is there. Again this analysis of text can also improve a student's own written work by giving practice in the idea of paragraphing.

3. Labelling – this calls on the student to apply labels to the text. Again the student is required to ask questions of the text – "What is this piece about?" "What are the different themes/points being made?" The labels can be short statements of content alongside the text, or sub-headings for paragraphs. The student comes up with their own labels. This can be a useful exercise to follow on from segmenting. *(see examples 1 & 2).*

Analysis of the text leads on to alternative ways of recording or representing the information, as outlined below.

1. Listing – this follows from underlining. Those words/phrases that were underlined can be listed, which often brings out the essentials from the text. This can be a step towards note-making or summarising.

2. Tables – drawing up tables from the text allows students to produce an order from the text and again ask questions. Alternatively the student can complete tables already prepared by the tutor from the text.

3. Diagrams – producing a diagrammatic representation of the text asks the student

MATCHING EXERCISE

Match the descriptions with the programme titles.

Molly, cheesed off by all the attention Brendan is getting from the *Burrigan Examiner,* launches herself into decisive action.	**9.00 THE OTHER EUROPE**
Guess who's dishing out advice today? You've got it. Junior Health Minister Edwina Currie is on about tranquilliser addiction.	**7.30 THE ROCK 'N' ROLL YEARS**
Pauline prepares for her first Christmas without Lou, wondering if she'll get the support she needs from her family. I doubt it, somehow. Wicksy, who has copied Dirty Den's way with women, works on a plan to earn extra cash. (TST).	**12.30 A COUNTRY PRACTICE**
Last of series examines how nations of the 'Other Europe' tried to resist or reform the Soviet-style Communist system imposed upon them in the post-war years.	**7.30 EASTENDERS**
1973 – the IRA launch a bombing campaign in England, the Vietnam War ends and Watergate begins. Music by Sweet, Elton John, Bryan Ferry and Roxy Music, Slade, The Osmonds, Gary Glitter. (R).	**5.00 ADVICE SHOP**

2. The student is asked to attach the labels – programme titles to the descriptions. This is taken from a newspaper. The student brings their own knowledge of TV to this.

4. Grouping and Ranking – again these exercises follow on from earlier ones. One involves grouping similar ideas together, possibly as an outcome of labelling. The categories can be student or tutor generated. Alternatively ideas/paragraphs can be ranked by the student in order of importance.

for a much fuller comprehension than comprehension questions do. It is a method of putting the text 'in your own words'. It can also clearly demonstrate where someone is misreading or being confused by the text. Alternatively, a student can complete a diagram from the text, as with tables. *(see example 3).*

SKETCH MAP

Jim gives Steve the following directions to his house.

From St. Mary's Church in the High Street you turn right up the High Street. Walk on until you meet the T-Junction with Park Street. Turn right along Park Street, past the Bank on the corner. Just past the Bank you come to a zebra crossing where you can cross the road to the library. Carry on down the road. Just past the library is a small side road to your left, which is Lovers Lane. Walk along this road on the left hand side till you come to a letter box. The letter box is outside my house.

Jim decides it would be better to give Steve a sketch map. Draw a map from the details given above.

3. This exercise is very popular with adults. They enjoy turning words into something accessible.

4. Student Questions – as a group exercise it can be beneficial for students to generate their own questions from the text. The tutor doesn't need to be the source of all materials. I have had a pair of students who regularly wrote pieces which they turned into deletion exercises for each other. They also set comprehension questions for each other. This increased their confidence, motivation and reading skills.

5. Summary – Most of these recording activities move towards summarising the text. Students having analysed the main points of a text can then move on to sum it up in their own words. At this stage real understanding is established.

Reconstruction of Text

Text reconstruction has the same aims as analysis of the text, but the student is presented with text in a jumbled form. As well as looking at the meaning of the text the student is also concerned with the form.

1. Completion – this involves the tutor in taking out words/phrases/sentences from the text (or students can do this for each other). The text should leave enough clues for the completion to be possible. Although this was developed from cloze technique it isn't necessary to delete every ninth word, but to delete meaningful words or phrases. This not only exercises the skill of reading within context but also of bringing prior knowledge to the text. *(see example 4).*

2. Sequencing – this involves giving the student jumbled up pieces of text and asking them to put them into some logical order. The pieces do not have to be the

My garden is _____ half finished. There is a _____ the _____ room. Next to the patio is the _____ garden, _____ the rabbit sits.

There is a bird _____ in front of the greenhouse and I am _____ the garden next door.

I am laying a _____ for the paving _____. They are grey in _____ and made to look _____

I am waiting for _____ money to finish the _____

4. This is based on a student's language experience work.

same length. It is then useful to see if the proposed order matches the original author. *(see example 5)*.

3. Prediction – this can involve using the beginning of a piece of text and asking students to predict what comes next, or in creative writing, what might happen next. It can also begin with looking at the title of a book/article/chapter and predicting what it is about.

Multi-DARTs

Although I have tried to outline all these activities separately I should emphasise that you can combine as many or as few of them as is useful in a session or with a passage of text.

What text can I use DARTs with?

The answer to this can be 'almost anything'. I have already suggested that these methods can be used at any level and with a variety of students. With craft students I have used these activities with simple sets of instructions, safety booklets and more complicated handouts. For ESOL and reading students the texts often have a more functional basis e.g. newspaper articles, recipes and language experience passages. There are two important points to remember.

The text should be meaningful to the student

For instance, the student who wants to try English cooking can get to grips with recipes, while the student who wants to try Dickens can use these activities to get to grips with literature.

The text should be at an appropriate level of readability

Although this sounds very text-based it should be remembered that the choice of and introduction of the text should be shared, at least between tutor and student, or a small group of students when practicable. For beginning readers the tutor can introduce the text by reading it. I have found that where a tutor does not have the time during a class for this, a recording can be made for the student to use. This sounds as if reading is once again a solitary activity, but the student is sharing reading with a voice they know, and the tutor can be available to discuss the text. It also allows a student to dictate their own pace. Students coping with text at their own pace can then discuss that text between themselves when they are ready.

Summary

I suggested earlier in this article that DARTs encourage the practice of SQ3R.

Survey – selecting a text is part of the process, and prediction exercises help a reader to realise that the reading process begins before we actually begin reading concentrated text.

Question – DARTs provide the reader with purpose for reading and practice in the questions that fluent readers pose of text.

Read – reading beyond 'receptive' (word-based reading) to 'reflective' reading (purposeful reading/reading between the lines).

Review – as part of the process of DARTs ask the student to review whether the text has answered the questions they posed.

Remember – remembering comes from being actively involved in the text.

DARTs were evolved to help children achieve 'reflective' reading. Many adults we see never developed this type of reading. DARTs can help them achieve flexible reading styles. The added bonus with adults is that they have more experience than children to bring to the text. DARTs offers them a step up from literal word-bound reading to a more satisfying reading style and deeper comprehension.

References:

Lunzer & Gardner *"Learning From The Written Word"* (Oliver & Boyd)

Gardner *"Beyond Beginning Reading"* in Teacher's Resource Book – Levels 9 & 10 Ginn Reading Programme.

Davies *"Fostering Independent Reading through Group Discussion"* in Teacher's Resource Book – Levels 11, 12, 13 Ginn Reading Programme.

LAYING A LAWN

Instructions

Put the instructions in the right order.

1. Clear away old debris.

   Roller it.

   Check for level surface.

   Lay the turf in a sequence of lines interlocking.

   Rotavate.

   It is then best to leave them without walking on them for a month.

   Tip sand and gravel down, and compost.

   Rake out the stones and lumps.

   Using a laid down scaffolding board to work off, lay lawn, as turf, as you would a course of bricks. You should never leave little bits on the end because they have a tendency to shrink.

   Light rake.

   Water, depending on the weather, every two days, or daily if it is hot.

5. This is based on a student's language experience work. This method has proved very useful for students who need to cope with instructions.

Basic Skills Tests (Reference Set)

by Pauline Smith and Chris Whetton

Published by N.F.E.R. – Nelson, Darville House, 2 Oxford Rd, E. Windsor, Berks SL4 1DF

Price: £16.00 + VAT

ISBN 4029 01 6

The tests are intended primarily for use by employers and Training Agency personnel who screen candidates for the suitability of their literacy/numeracy skills for jobs or courses.

The literacy tests involve the extraction of information from, and written tasks based on, an attractive fictional newspaper. The numeracy tests involve four rule calculation approximations, and problems based on numerical information embedded in text. They can be used as a whole or in part, timed or untimed, under formal or informal conditions.

The authors introduce from the U.S.A. the idea of "Standard Setting", enabling interpretation of test scores in relation to the literacy/numeracy demands of a job or course. The method is described fully and users are encouraged to produce score guidelines relevant to their own occupational area. This seems to be an acceptable use of test scores for adults rather than comparisons with the norms established on teenagers.

The authors have put effort into reducing the negative elements inherent in testing candidates who have failed tests before. However, the trial using adult M.S.C. trainees showed that the formal, timed test would be unsuitable for students whose confidence is low. (I would also exclude those thought to have *many* problems with reading or anthmetic.) In such cases, informal one-to-one assessments are recommended when training needs could be discussed. This indicates that there should be some informal screening procedure before testing to exclude such candidates.

The test materials provide a good focus for informal assessment but only by a skilled A.B.E. assessor as the guidelines given are inadequate to enable an inexperienced tutor to plan a training programme.

The consensus of opinion within A.B.E. is against testing – however those tests, used formally, are designed for specific screening purposes and, linked to the "Standard Setting" procedure, could be a useful tool for those purposes.

Sue Mc Culloch
North Cheshire College
Cheshire Education Authority

Start Reading Resource Pack Basic Reading for Adults

by Chris Colverson

Published by Starters Books and Tapes, PO Box 89, Wallington, Surrey SM6 OUF

Price: Whole Pack £18.50
Individual Books £5.00 With Tapes

ISBN 1 872033 78 4 (Pack)

This pack, described as a 10-week course in basic reading for adults, consists of four cassette tapes, each accompanied by a booklet, intended for use in the class or at home.

Reading topics included are those which one might expect to be relevant to most adult learners. However, I was disappointed about some aspects of the material.

The pack is designed to develop whole-word recognition and phonic attack. No reference is made to using the context or to reading for meaning. Although the handwritten format gives texts a "homemade" unthreatening appearance, I feel that the "Signs in Public Places" would have been more effective if they had been reproduced as they appear in real life, rather than out of context.

Reading texts are of a language experience style, individual words and lines being numbered for identification. Each learning unit concludes with a revision/assessment exercise on key words. These units could work successfully with appropriate follow-up by a tutor.

My main concern was with the section on "sounding out" which refers to "letter shapes" (unnamed) and which uses nursery-style drawings. The text is, understandably, rather contrived and simply demonstrates the inappropriateness of a phonic approach to learning to read. I have not yet had an opportunity to obtain students' views on these materials, but would suggest they are used only selectively as several aspects of the pack not only appear childish but could foster teaching approaches considered inappropriate for adults.

Linda Knights
Advisory Tutor for Adult Basic Education, Essex Education Authority

Current Issues in Teaching English as a Second Language to Adults

Edited by Sandra Nicholls and Elizabeth Hoadley-Maidment

Published by Edward Arnold

Price: £7.25

ISBN 0 7131 8450 7

This volume is a collection of articles on many of the issues concerning those currently involved in teaching English to bilingual adults. The contributors are drawn from experienced practitioners in community, adult, vocational and further education including advisors with a regional or national overview of practice and curriculum development.

The book is divided into six sections; Influences and Developments, Policy and Practice, Developing Effective Provision, Current Classroom Issues, Assessment and Accreditation, Teacher Training and Staff Development. Each section contains an introduction followed by a series of three or four articles related to the theme. The first section provides an overview and outlines fundamental issues; the place of language in education; positive recognition of linguistic culture in Britain today; language and disadvantage, anti-racism and equal opportunities.

The individual articles are brief and easy to read with clear examples from current practice, followed in most cases by references or recommended further reading. They are therefore very accessible and can be used in a variety of ways by trainers, organisers or individual teachers. For example as follow-up reading in basic training or as an entry point to more detailed reading and research through the bibliographies for those with more

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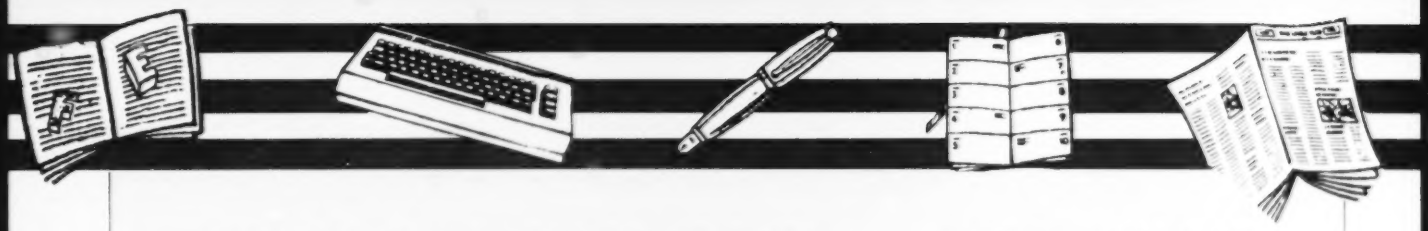

experience. Articles can be used to stimulate discussion/further study in group or individual staff development programmes.

The book will be a valuable resource for all involved in the education of bilingual adults in Britain.

Linda Murphy
Adult Education Officer
Wycombe Area
Buckinghamshire Education Authority

Childhood Memories

by Gerard Melia

Published by Hodder and Stoughton

1. Green Strawberry *£3.25*
ISBN 0 340 42360 9

2. Britannia Rules *£3.25*
ISBN 0 340 42361 7

3. The Silvertown Letters *£2.25*
ISBN 0 340 42358 7

4. Nurse *£2.25*
ISBN 0 340 42359 5

This series comprises 2 readers and 2 plays. With exception of 'Nurse' these books are based on the memories and experiences of the author as a child in the North of England and as an adult in the Docklands Communities of East London.

"Green Strawberry" is set in the Docklands of Newham and follows the life of a diabetic youngster who gets involved in an adventure. It was quite believable and seemed to be the most popular of the four books.

"Britannia Rules" is about the experiences of a group of school children during the late 1930's. It touches on the issue of not being able to read and write but this is not explored. It also contains pieces of handwritten text which are difficult to read.

"The Silvertown Letters" is about the life of a family in East London during the First World War. Again the play mentions someone not able to read and write but again it is so brief it could easily be missed. The main characters are again children.

"Nurse" is set in the North of England and follows the fortunes of a small group of children and one particuarly who trains as a nurse with Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War. I was disappointed because, although the book was set in the North there was no dialect or accent in the conversation pieces.

With all of the books I found the characters unbelievable and thought the language that they used complicated, awkward and unreal. I don't think the plays are suitable for group work with adult literacy students because there are too many characters, some with short parts and people would have to take about 3 or 4 parts each.

This set of books has been written specifically for use with older children in the age range of 12-15 years. This is written on the back sleeve of each book and many adult students may find this offensive or patronising. Having said this, these books may be suitable for those who enjoy reading about other people's experiences and they could be used to generate individual or group discussion and writing on the lines of local/oral history projects. However, I know there are books available that are more suitable for use with adults and, given limited funding of schemes, I think money could be better spent on other, more appropriate, resources.

Christine Leigh
Literacy/Numeracy Development Worker, Newham Parents' Centre

My First Job - 1
My First Job - 2

by Islington Groups Write

Available from Islington AEI, Eden Grove Branch, Ringcross JM School, Georges Road, London N7 8EE

Price: 50p each

These books were studied by two groups of mixed ability students who found them interesting and would like to have copies. There are 26 pages (A5 format) in each with contributions by students from a variety of countries including St Lucia, Guyana and Ireland. The print is 'jumbo' style and dark, so relatively easy to read although a bit hard on the eyes and so not our favourite for encouraging fluent reading.

There are simple line drawings interspersed throughout but these do not greatly aid understanding. Contributions vary in length and some extended passages look daunting to the less able reader. Much of the vocabulary is straightforward.

The students liked the content and lively conversations were stimulated about personal experiences, which could in turn lead to written work. Several YTS trainees attend the groups, and this is a theme to which they could relate as well as older students.

Less able readers appreciated the shorter passages. More able readers coped easily but disliked what they saw as ungrammatical English by some contributors.

The tutors were pleased with the discussions which arose and thought that the books would be a useful source for comprehensions. It was also a sign of what could be achieved by students. However, although the production is of a good quality it does not have the gloss of a professional publication.

Helen Allgrove
Organising Tutor ABE
Havering Education Authority

Memories of Distant Days

by Carrie Stocks, Douglas Gibbons-Sissons, Eileen Tipple

Published by PRU (Printing and Publishing Unit for Continuing Education), 27 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS7 3PD

Price: £1.71 (incl p&p)

My resistance to yet another set of memories vanished as soon as I started to read. This collection of three very different stories makes fascinating and stimulating reading. I'm not quite so sure about some of the (period?) illustrations, but perhaps that's no bad thing as they could provoke quite a lot of reaction. Whilst reading the first story, "Growing up in Hunslett" I was often in need of help with certain terms and names. I could have used annotations (as liberally provided in "My Childhood Days"). What are "pikelets" for example?

There is so much detail in the stories, much of it really absorbing. Dialogue also enhances the text in a very lively way. You feel that you are learning as you read. In particular, in "Earning an honest bob" I learnt some very pithy insults!

The third story, "The Wild West

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Show", is totally surprising. It's about a young black girl who joins the knife thrower and flame throwing act in the travelling fair. Very little is made of the fact that she is black; at the end of the story she mentions quite casually that during the Nottingham race riots of 1957 she couldn't leave the trailer.

Part of the last sentence from one of the stories says a lot about differences between school and adult-education writing classes: "on returning to school I could not think of anything worth putting in an essay that we were asked to do when we got back." This completes a fascinating account of exactly what the writer hadn't been able to write about at school.

Maggie Fordham
Literacy Co-ordinator
Haringey Education Authority

In Perspective – a handbook for Adult Basic Education Tutors working with visually impaired learners.

Published by Scottish Community Education Council and the Royal National Institute for the Blind

Price: £4.00

ISBN 0 947919 34 1

Available from SCEC, West Coates House, 90 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5LQ

This is the sort of handbook I could have done with six months ago. It is aimed specifically at ABE tutors and has a lot of ideas and information that I have learnt the hard way by re-inventing the wheel.

The book is simply and clearly laid out and easy to read. It deals with raising the awareness of tutors and students and very clearly explains the range and types of vision that students might have. However, one vital piece of information that is not included is that not all partially-sighted students can see or distinguish colour.

There is plenty of information included about the variety of low vision aids that can be used, ranging from types of pens and paper and lighting through to closed circuit televisions and special computers.

For me working in London, a frustrating aspect of the book was the frequent reference to many useful agencies and services based in Scotland but as so many things are London-centred this actually made a refreshing change. I also felt that the book did not address the issue of how difficult and frustrating it can be for a tutor dealing with large organisations like the RNIB and BESS who often do not appear to be able to offer the information and services you would expect.

However, on the whole a welcome addition to our resources and one I would recommend to any tutor working with or planning to work with a visually impaired student.

Liz Elsie
ALBSU Project Worker
Barnet Education Authority

The Handwriting File

by Jean Alston and Jane Taylor

Published by LDA (Ref. No. LD333)

Price: £13.60

ISBN 0905 114 469

It is quite common, say the authors of "The Handwriting File" for teachers still to write 'Untidy Writing' at the end of a pupil's written work but offer little guidance to help the pupil improve. Thus the aim of the File is to help the classroom teacher with assessment and remediation and to create a constructive programme for the pupil with difficulties in handwriting.

The File is concise, clearly laid out and presented in an A4 ringbinder for the easy removal of asessment sheets for photocopying purposes.

Part 1 'Assessment' includes a Checklist which is completed from the teacher's observation of the pupil and from a sample of his or her handwriting. There is also a Letter Formation Assessment Sheet.

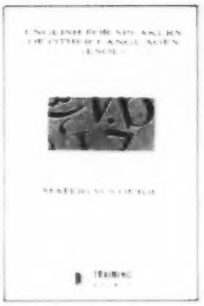
Part 2 'Discussion and Teaching Points' includes: pencil hold; position of paper; sitting position; letter formation; reversals and inversions; rounded letters; letters which need to close; numbers; letter size; spacing; capital letters. Under each heading are teaching points for ways in which handwriting can be improved.

Whilst "The Handwriting File" is written primarily for teachers in primary schools, it can also be of use in enabling ABE students to improve the legibility, speed and style of their handwriting. The checklist is simple to administer, lends itself to adaptation and can be completed by a tutor and student together. As each item in the checklist refers to a teaching point, an individualised programme of learning can be discussed and negotiated.

Handwriting can often be a matter of concern to students and whilst practice and confidence are often all that is needed, a selective use of "The Handwriting File" could be of real benefit to those students who require a simple structure to enable them to develop a style which they feel to be satisfactory.

Wendy Cole
Adult Basic Education Coordinator
West Sussex Education Authority

English for Speakers of Other Languages – Materials Guide



Published by COIC Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ

Price: £4.25

ISBN 086110 529 X

This guide has been produced by the Training Agency for ESOL practitioners supporting bilingual trainees on ET and YTS. The book is in two sections: an introduction, looking at general issues and approaches, and the guide itself which gives details of appropriate published materials for developing numeracy and communication skills.

The introduction provides some clear definitions of basic terms used in ESOL and vocational training, and these are developed into useful examples of good practice. There is a welcome emphasis on bilingual approaches to assessment, teaching and staff development and also on the involvement of bilingual staff. A wide range of suggestions is made on ways of delivering training and support and on encouraging autonomous learning. These are brief, but there are references for further reading and sources of advice and help.

The guide itself starts with a checklist summarising the criteria

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which have been used in the selection of materials. It is divided according to skill, but is also cross-referenced for bilingual materials and vocational areas. Each publication is described in terms of its uses, its target group, its content in terms of section headings and languages used and also whether it involves print, tape, video or computer software. This is clearly set out so that the reader can see at a glance whether or not the materials are likely to be useful. Finally, there are lists of publishers, bilingual dictionaries and further sources of help.

Overall, the publication is a useful new resource for teachers and trainers.

Angela Ayton and
Krystyna Makowiecka
Pathway FE Centre, Southall
Ealing Education Authority

An Easy Job
Late
First Time Around
Sorry Wrong Party
Burglars
Blind Date
Another Monday Evening
Diet
Hung Over

Published by Rosa Books from AVANTI, 1 Wellington Rd, Stevenage SG 29

Price: 75p each

Tutors and students at the Basic Education Unit in Llanelli have read and enjoyed this series of books. Funnily enough, they proved more popular with the ladies.

We found the language natural, making easy reading for the less confident readers. The print is of a good size and the illustrations do not intrude too much on the text.

If there is a criticism, it is of some of the cover designs which meant nothing to most of us.

The stories made a good jumping off point for discussions, stimulating writing about similar happenings in our lives.

The books are cheaply produced and would not make a big hole in any Centre's budget.

Barbara Lister, Group Tutor
Dyfed Education Authority

My Childhood Days

by Bill, a Leeds chap

Published by PRU (Printing and Publishing Unit for Continuing Education), 27 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS7 3PD.

Price: £2.08 (inc. p&p)

A nostalgic look at various aspects of childhood, finishing with the war, when children couldn't go out any more in the blackout and "All the 'good days' had vanished, leaving only happy memories".

Each of the nine sections is short, boldly printed and easy to read. There are some useful annotations which qualify the information in the book. You can even find out how to make a bogie if you didn't know already.

The book is well designed, with a content which involves and invites group discussion and comparison. However, I find it frustrating not to know who did the illustrations and I'd like to know more about how they were selected. The print and layout look professional and, for me, contrast too much with the drawings.

This is a good book to spark off more student writing, particularly given the very wide range of childhood experiences mentioned.

Maggie Fordham
Literacy Co-ordinator
Haringey Education Authority

Blooming Days

by various authors

Published by Lancaster College of Adult Education

Price: £1.35

Available from AVANTI

This book was very popular with both the groups who looked at it. It is attractively produced with a professional, well-designed style. It has 31 pages (A5 format) with illustrations on alternate pages relating to a piece of text (although some of the drawings are rather too dark). There are three stories.

The print style is enlarged and well-spaced and seemed to facilitate easy reading.

Students appreciated the adult content of the stories about times gone by, and felt that the main appeal was for readers over the age of 30. Less able students needed help with some words but appreciated the short sentences and joined in discussions, whilst very able students found it too easy. The intermediate group enjoyed reading it and were encouraged by their sucesses.

Tutors were delighted with the response of the students and to have interesting, well-produced reading material of an adult nature. Everyone would like more of the same!

Helen Allgrove
Organising Tutor ABE
Havering Education Authority

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017

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